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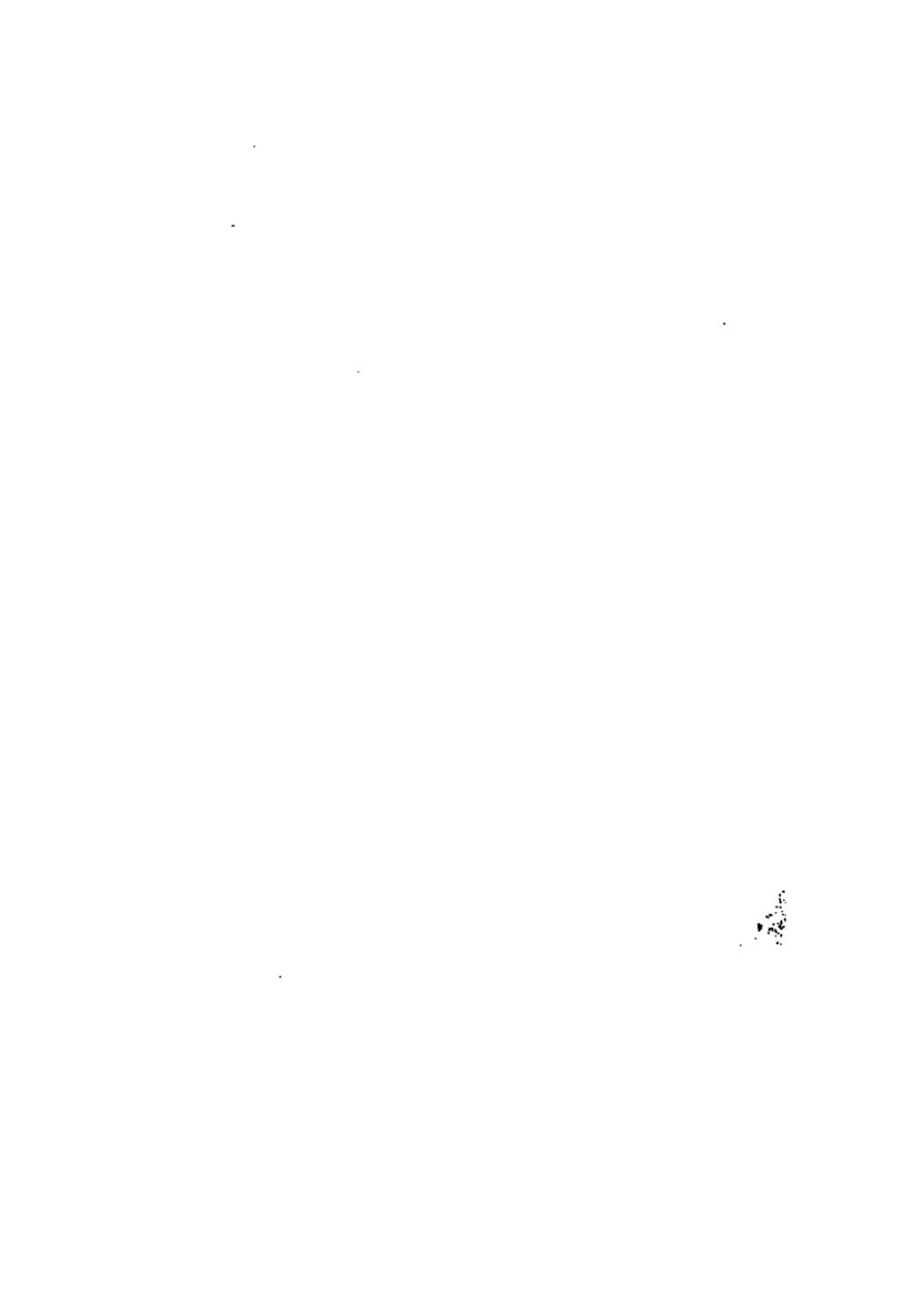
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CHRISTMAS TALES,

HISTORICAL AND DOMESTIC.

BY

W. H. HARRISON,

AUTHOR OF TALES OF A PHYSICIAN, THE HUMOURIST,

ETC. ETC.

EMBELLISHED WITH ENGRAVINGS,

BY BACON, ENGLEHEART, CHARLES ROLLS, AND GOODYEAR;

FROM DESIGNS BY

RICHTER, CORBOULD, AND J. M. WRIGHT.

WITH

A MEDALLION PORTRAIT OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

—
LONDON:

JENNINGS AND CHAPLIN.

THE Author, having so frequently stood forward as a candidate for the favour of the Public, has little to say, in the way of preface, on the present occasion, beyond the expression of his acknowledgments—and they are gratefully offered—for the indulgence which has been extended to his previous productions.

That the Pictorial Embellishments of the Annuals are derived from subjects originally unconnected with the volumes they adorn, and that, consequently, the Letter-press is adapted to the Plates, is a fact so generally known, that little credit for candour is claimed in the avowal that the Engravings of this Work were made from drawings, by eminent masters, intended to illustrate the Novels of SIR WALTER SCOTT.

The Vignette Portrait of that illustrious man, engraved, by the obliging permission of Mr. Parker, from a medal, to the likeness of which Sir Walter himself has borne testimony, will, it is presumed, at a time when his loss is yet fresh in the public mind, add materially to the interest of the volume.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE LOST DEED	3
THE NOVICE	75
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN UGLY MAN	165
THE LAWYER'S DAUGHTER	235

LIST OF PLATES.

VIGNETTE TITLE — MEDALLION PORTRAIT

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

ENGRAVED BY BATE,

FROM A MEDAL BY STOTHARD, FROM A BUST BY CHANTREY, R.A.

SUBJECTS.	DESIGNERS.	ENGRAVERS.	PAGE
<i>Frontispiece.</i>			
The Lawyer's Daughter	{ H. RICHTER . . .	<i>Engleheart.</i>	
The Lost Deed	H. RICHTER . . .	<i>F. Bacon . . .</i>	22
The Novice	{ J. M. WRIGHT . . .	<i>F. Bacon . . .</i>	133
Autobiography of an Ugly Man	{ H. RICHTER . . .	<i>Charles Rulls . . .</i>	165
The Lawyer's Daughter . . .	{ J. M. WRIGHT . . .	<i>Engleheart . . .</i>	212
	H. CORBOULD . . .	<i>J. Goodyer . . .</i>	267

THE LOST DEED.



THE LOST DEED.

CHAPTER I.

IN the centre of a richly wooded and very extensive park, gradually sloping towards the Southampton water, stood, some years ago, a manorial edifice, which was more distinguished by the space and accommodation of its interior, than by the architectural elegance of its external. It was a bi-fronted building of red brick, with a multitude of windows; while the offices, stretching away on either hand, presented the appearance of irregular and disproportioned wings. But if, in its construction, show was, in many instances, sacrificed to convenience, there were not a few in which convenience was made subservient to show. The hard and mirror-like oak floors not unfrequently obliged the beau of ancient days to abandon the perpendicular for the horizontal, and indulged him with oblique views of society

through the vista of his own legs; while the stair-cases, formed of the same material, and burnished with equal care, were wont, by collision with skulls quite as hard, though infinitely less polished, to inculcate the expediency of going to bed sober. The subsequent introduction of carpets, however, has placed our modern Philanders on a different footing, and they are accordingly observed to walk with less circumspection: on the other hand, the altered habits of genteel life have rendered the admonition to sobriety almost unnecessary; but whether the change be attributable to a higher state of morals, or the predominance of more "gentlemanly vices," it falls not within my province to determine.

The estate, which was of considerable value, had, for many years, been in the possession of an ancient and honourable family, one of the latter representatives of which, having been early left a widower, directed, in the testamentary disposition of his wealth, that the demesne in question should be sold, and its produce divided among certain of his relatives, whom he deemed to have a better claim on, or greater need of, his bounty.

Accordingly, at the death of the testator, the property was disposed of, and passed into the hands of a rich London merchant, who, on retiring from business at an early period of his life, resolved on investing the whole of his accumulations in land; and thus, that portion of his capital, which was not absorbed by the purchase of the estate, he devoted to its improvement.

Mr. Somerville, for such was the name of the merchant, remained for some years in the undisturbed enjoyment of the demesne, the name of which was Beechgrove. In the course of that time he acquired the esteem of his neighbours, and the love of his tenantry, who saw, with feelings of unmixed regret, his title to an estate, of which he had been so worthy a steward, disputed by the heir at law of its previous proprietor.

Mr. Trevor, the new claimant, who, for some unexplained reason of his relative, had been excluded from a participation in the produce of the sale, was a person in circumstances far from affluent, but who, up to the period of his asserting his right to the estate, had borne an irreproachable character. His wife, however, was a woman of a masculine mind, and of a restless and ambitious disposition; while her husband, yielding to the violence of her imperious temper, and to the influence of those personal charms which had first won his heart, was wont to pay an almost implicit deference to her dictates, and thus was frequently betrayed into actions, against which his reason and his conscience alike protested.

Mrs. Trevor, who had long brooded, in sullen but unavailing discontent, over the invidious exception which had been made to the prejudice, and, as she deemed, to the wrong of her husband, at length prevailed on him to set up a claim to the estate; and it was somewhat remarkable, that the period at which she urged him to the adoption of the step, was immediately after the occurrence

of a fire in the house of Mr. Somerville's attorney, in whose custody were the deeds of the contested property.

The measure, once resolved on, was prosecuted with a vigour corresponding with the energy of her who suggested it, and the question was, in due time, submitted to the decision of the law. The case of the defendant was as just as ever came before a court, and the chain of his evidence was perfect in all but a single link. The papers relating to the estate were produced; but one was wanting, and the deficiency was fatal. It was the identical deed which transferred the title to the purchaser. The plaintiff obtained a verdict, and Mr. Somerville was thrust forth upon the wide world without a shilling. He had, however, the melancholy pleasure of reflecting, that his wife, who died a few months before the claim to Beechgrove was set up, had been spared a participation in his reverse of fortune, while his son was of too tender an age to feel it very acutely.

The triumph of Mrs. Trevor was complete; and the indomitable pride and arrogance of her nature had now an ample field. It will readily be imagined, that over the wealth which she had suggested the means of acquiring, she exercised no slight control; and with the extension of her power grew the abuse of it.

The tenantry, who had so long prospered under the mild and benevolent Somerville, found her grinding and oppressive, and in her dispensations to the poor she was at once niggardly and ostenta-

tious. On the other hand, her equipages were splendid, and her entertainments magnificent; nor was the look of exultation, with which she surveyed these appendages of her ill-gotten riches, mitigated by a single pang of remorse.

To her husband, however, this accession of wealth appeared to have brought with it no increase to his happiness. On the contrary, cheerfulness, which, if not his constant, had been his frequent guest, became a stranger to his bosom; and the head which had reposed peacefully on a humble couch, was restless on a bed of down. The truth is, he was not naturally a rapacious, or even an unjust man; but he was a weak one, and, through his weakness, he became wicked. On the other hand, pride and selfishness had not steeled his bosom, as they had his wife's, to the stings of compunction; and he could not look upon the splendour by which he was surrounded, without contrasting it with the condition of him, whom he had legally, but not righteously, cast forth on the cold charity of the world. When he walked in his garden, he rarely plucked a flower; as though he hesitated to contaminate the emblem of innocence by the pollution of his guilty touch. The umbrageous oaks, which, to his predecessor, had been both shelter and shade, appeared to cast over him the baneful influence of the Upas tree.

Shortly after Mr. Trevor came into possession of the estate, he found it necessary to change his name to Thornhill, the family name of his wife,

in order that he might take certain property in her right.

The Thornhills had two children, a son and a daughter; the name of the elder of whom was Richard, who, from the hour of his birth, became the darling of his mother, and continued to engross her affection, to the exclusion, it would appear, of every one else. In childhood he was humoured in every whim and fancy; in his youth, he was suffered to pursue or neglect his studies as it seemed good in his eyes; and, as he approached to manhood, he was, through her influence with his father, abundantly supplied with the means of indulging in every sensual gratification which tends to debase and brutalize the human mind. In return for this mistaken fondness, he cherished that sort of attachment to his mother, which an animal entertains for the master who feeds him. Happening to resemble her in many points of character, he was early assumed into her counsels; and for whatever he might want of her bold and daring spirit, he amply compensated by the most subtle cunning, and the deeper malignity of his heart.

Gertrude, as a child, had little part in her mother's affection, and, as she grew to womanhood, was still less the object of it. Mrs. Thornhill, as has been previously remarked, possessed personal attractions of no ordinary power, upon which she valued herself accordingly; and it was, therefore, with no complacent feelings that she beheld the ripening beauties of her daughter

dividing the admiration, of which she was wont to be the centre in her own circle.

But, if Gertrude had enjoyed little of her mother's love, she had not, on the other hand, been contaminated by any of her vices. Her education had early been committed to the superintendence of one, who, with every accomplishment with which to grace the mind of her pupil, possessed those principles of religion which alone can properly regulate and direct the heart. Gertrude was, indeed, a lovely creature, and as gentle as she was lovely.

With her father, she was an object of the tenderest affection; indeed, it was in the contemplation of the graces of her mind and person alone that he ever appeared, for a moment, to forget the remorse which was gnawing at his heart: and there were times, when he felt an almost irresistible impulse to pour into her bosom the whole story of his crime and his sorrow; but the dread of her imperious and overbearing mother sealed his lips. It happened, one afternoon, during the vernal equinox, that Gertrude and her father were sitting together in an apartment which commanded a view of the sea, and were watching the gradual approach of a tempest, which the angry aspect of the clouds had, for some hours, predicted. The little fishing craft, profiting by the warning, were running for the harbour, while the larger vessels were reefing their sails, and making "every thing snug," to meet the squall.

As the gale increased, the attention of the two spectators was attracted by a small brig, which was labouring against the tempest, and which, as they were reconnoitring her through their telescopes, presented the appearance of a foreigner; while the hurry and confusion which prevailed on her decks, betrayed a deficiency in the seamanship of her navigators, or their ignorance of the coast.

Mr. Thornhill and his daughter, at length, became so much interested in the fate of the vessel, that, notwithstanding the violence of the wind, they left the house, and proceeded towards the shore by which the park was bounded. On reaching the beach, they found another person, who had been attracted to the spot by feelings correspondent with their own. He was a stout, but not corpulent man, somewhat above the middle height, with a rough weather-beaten countenance, and was, apparently, about fifty years old. His attire was singular, and rendered perfectly grotesque by its extraordinary combination. His hat was of canvass, which was preserved in its shape, and rendered perfectly water-proof, by an impenetrable coating of tar. His nether man was encased in a pair of long loose trowsers, of coarse blue cloth, which, disdaining the aid of suspenders or braces, were supported, in the true nautical fashion, by means of a waistband tightened above the hips. His waistcoat was of nearly similar materials, while, over all, he wore a large fustian jacket, with

capacious pockets, reaching nearly to his knees, such as is usually worn by sportsmen or game-keepers, of whose occupation he exhibited the other implements of a shot-belt and fowling-piece. The latter, however, was slung over his shoulder, while he was examining the brig through an old shagreen-cased telescope.

Having thus introduced a new character, we shall, if we do not gratify the curiosity of our readers, be pardoned, we trust, for trespassing upon their patience, by accounting for the phenomenon presented in our incongruously apparelled friend.

Benjamin Bight, for such was his name, was an old man-of-war's man, who, after buffeting his enemies and the billows for twenty years, attained the rank of boatswain's mate, in a flag ship on a foreign station; and in that capacity, by his regularity, courage, and expertness, so ingratiated himself with the admiral, that he was promoted to the higher grade of boatswain in a gun-brig which formed part of the squadron.

Ben, however, who had been the merriest fellow alive on board a line-of-battle ship, to which he had always been accustomed, became morose and melancholy within the more confined dimensions of a gun-brig. This unexpected change coming to the ears of his patron, the latter, annoyed at finding the measure, which he had adopted to promote Ben's comfort, produce the contrary result, sent for the boatswain, and remonstrated with him on the subject.

Bight, in his exculpation, alleged that he had never before been to sea in a washing-tub, than which, he affirmed, the brig was no better, seeing that she was constantly full of water; and concluded by imploring of the admiral, as the greatest favour he could confer upon him, to place him in his old berth of boatswain's mate, and thus restore him to his ancient comforts. This request was complied with, and, when his commander struck his flag, he contrived to get his old follower a pension, and subsequently installed him in the office of gamekeeper, on an estate, which he had purchased, contiguous to that of Mr. Thornhill.

For the duties of an appointment, so foreign to his former habits, the admiral maintained, in defiance of all remonstrance, that Benjamin was eminently qualified, seeing that he was a good shot, a brave man, and an honest one, and, being accustomed to watch by night as well as by day, would keep a sharp look-out upon the poachers.

Bight, it is but proper to say, fully justified his master's choice of a gamekeeper, but the force of habit was strong upon him. There were many of the usages of "land lubbers" to which the old tar could not bring himself to conform, and the admiral had too sincere a respect for nautical prejudices to force his inclinations. Accordingly, Benjamin, although he consented to assume the shooting-jacket, as a badge of office, retained, as to the rest of his investiture, the costume of his old profession; while, with a view

to the further indulgence of his amphibious propensities, his master had caused an old hulk to be drawn up, "high and dry," upon the beach, whereout Bight fashioned himself a berth which only wanted undulatory motion to render it the most delightfully inconvenient dwelling that ever was tenanted by mortal man. Whatever might be its disadvantages, it had a recommendation in its contiguity to the preserves, for, as those of my readers who have ever visited Southampton cannot have failed to remark, the woods extend almost to the water's edge.

When Mr. Thornhill and Gertrude had reached the spot on which the tar was posted, the latter had so identified himself with the crew of the vessel, whose movements he had been watching with so intense an interest, that he was bellowing his instructions through the storm, as though he had been actually on her deck, and raving with vexation and wrath at perceiving that his orders were disregarded.

"Well, Mr. Bight," inquired Thornhill, "what do you make of yonder vessel?"

"Make of her?" said Ben, "why that she is foreign-built, and her captain's a lubber, and does not know a binnacle from a boat-hook." Then, directing his observations again to the brig, he continued to bawl out his orders, not one of which, however, could have been heard, in such a hurricane, at a quarter of the distance. "Helm a lee!" he vociferated;—"down with it—that's right—no, she misses stays! and there she is,

hard and fast upon a sand-bank, as sure as my name's Ben Bight."

The case was as Benjamin had described it. The crew, probably aware of the proximity of the sand-bank, had endeavoured to tack, but the vessel, when her head came up to the wind, instead of going about, made stern-way, and there not being space enough for her to fill again, the steersman put the helm up, with a view of wearing her short round; but, before this evolution could be accomplished, she grounded upon the shoal, where she lay at the mercy of the waves, which were breaking over her with inconceivable fury.

The perilous situation of the ship was apparent to the most inexperienced observer, and Gertrude uttered a shriek of agony and alarm, while her father, anxiously addressing Benjamin, exclaimed, "She will float again next tide, Mr. Bight, will she not?"

"Her timbers may," was the reply; "but she has made her last trip."

"The crew," continued Mr. Thornhill, "will be able to save themselves by taking to their boats?"

"The long-boat," replied Benjamin, "was washed overboard when she struck, and her jolley boat would not live an instant in such a sea."

"But," remarked the other, "the distance from the beach is not great, and they will surely be able to reach it?"

"Yes," was the answer, "if they can swim like gulls."

" Yet, if I mistake not," said Thornhill, " the water is sufficiently shallow to admit of their wading to the shore."

" Four fathoms if it's a foot," responded the tar; and, at the same instant, a gun was fired from the brig in token of distress. Benjamin instinctively answered the signal by discharging his fowling-piece, which he flung down, and throwing off his shooting jacket, rushed through the surf towards a boat which was moored within a few yards of the beach.

A fisherman, who happened to approach at that moment, perceiving Bight's object, gallantly volunteered to " lend a hand;" and, after buffeting with the waves for some minutes, the pair succeeded in gaining the boat, which, although small, being what is termed very wide in the beam, was better fitted for their enterprize than a craft of more symmetrical proportions. After freeing her from her anchorage by the most expeditious method, namely, cutting her cable, they applied themselves each to an oar, and pulled stoutly towards the wreck.

With feelings of the most absorbing interest, was the progress of the brave tar and his companion watched by Thornhill and his daughter. At one moment, the boat was seen mounted on the crest of an enormous wave, and, the next, it was buried from their view in the watery valley behind it, and often, as it appeared to the spectators, never to emerge from the abyss. As the little shallop receded from the shore, it became

lost in the confusion of the waters, on which the shades of the evening were fast gathering, and the result was awaited by the party on the beach in breathless anxiety.

A considerable period elapsed after the boat had ceased to be distinguishable, during which the Thornhills were straining their eyes in the hope of descrying her on her return with a portion of the crew; but they were doomed to be disappointed. At length, after they had given her up for lost, the little craft again came in sight, but, as it approached, they observed that it had not received any addition to its passengers. When, however, Benjamin and his assistant reached the shore, it appeared, that, although they had either not been able, or had not deemed it safe, to receive any of the crew of the vessel into their boat, they had succeeded in seizing a hawser, which had been thrown to them, and one end of which was secured to some part of the wreck, and the other they proceeded to make fast to a stout post that was firmly fixed on the shore.

As soon as this manœuvre was performed, Benjamin announced its completion to those on the wreck, by firing the other barrel of his fowling-piece; and, shortly afterwards, the party on the beach perceived, by the vibration of the rope, that the crew were availing themselves of the communication thus established to attempt their escape. One by one, and with considerable difficulty, the mariners of the brig succeeded in gaining the shore; but the last brought the

melancholy tidings, that he had left behind him a passenger, whose debility, arising from indisposition, added to his want of expertness, would incapacitate him from taking advantage of the means of escape which the sailors, accustomed to the use of ropes, had adopted.

For some minutes after the last of the crew had effected a landing, there was no indication of the passenger making a similar attempt; at length, the hawser again vibrated, and, soon afterwards, they perceived the figure of a man making his way, with difficulty, along the rope; but, when he had attained to within a short distance of the shore, he seemed incapable of continuing his efforts. His legs, with which, conjointly with his arms, he had hitherto supported himself, relaxed their hold, and he hung from the rope by his hands alone.

Benjamin, who was well aware of the depth of water over which the passenger was suspended, leaped upon the hawser, and, with the activity of a monkey, made his way towards the spot, with the intention of affording his assistance; but, unhappily, at the very instant that he was about to place his hand upon the collar of the object of his humane exertions, the latter loosed his grasp, and dropped into the gulph which was yawning beneath him.

Bight, without a moment's hesitation, plunged into the abyss; and, after many ineffectual attempts, at length succeeded in getting a grasp of the passenger, whom he contrived to keep at

arm's length, with one hand, while, by the vigorous exertion of his other members, he forced his way into shallow water, through which he dragged his burthen to the beach, where, exhausted by his efforts, he dropped down beside him.

Benjamin soon recovered himself, but it was some time before the rescued passenger exhibited any signs of animation; when Mr. Thornhill, obeying the impulse of a humanity which, with all his faults, was not foreign to his bosom, directed that the unfortunate stranger should be conveyed to his mansion, where he was immediately put to bed, and received every care and attendance which his situation demanded.

CHAPTER II.

FATIGUE and exposure to the elements, acting upon a frame already debilitated by sickness, reduced the rescued passenger to a condition, from which his recovery was, for many days, despaired of, and, for a considerable period, very doubtful. At length, however, his youth, and an originally good constitution prevailed, and he was enabled to quit his chamber for an adjoining apartment.

Mr. Thornhill, it appeared, had taken an extraordinary interest in the fate of the stranger,

and his worthy helpmate, albeit not remarkable for her acquiescence in any household expense which did not administer to her views of interest or love of display, had too much tact to risk her husband's obedience in matters of moment, by thwarting him in unimportant ones. Moreover, she rightly judged, that, if left to pursue quietly any object indifferent to her, yet of interest to him, he would be the less likely to meddle on occasions in which his interference was not especially desired.

Thus it happened, that the care of the invalid devolved upon Mr. Thornhill and Gertrude. The father was almost a constant attendant in the chamber of the patient; and, when the latter was enabled to exchange it for a sitting-room, he had the benefit of the personal superintendance of the lovely daughter of his host. Mr. Thornhill was a man of information, and his conversational powers were by no means contemptible; but, although Gertrude was necessarily much his inferior in these qualifications, I do not find that her society was less valued by the invalid. And surely, if there be a situation wherein woman may be deemed to appropriate those angelic attributes with which the imagination of the poet is wont to invest her, it is when she ministers, as only woman can, to the wants and the weakness of the invalid. Whose hand like her's can smooth his pillow? Whose voice so effectually silence the querulousness of his temper, or soothe the anguish of his disease? Proffered by her, the viand hath

an added zest, and even the nauseous medicament is divested of its loathsomeness.

It is hard, in the season of youth, to quit

*“ The warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling’ring look behind.”*

Nay, it is among the frailties of our nature to esteem the ephemeral, albeit innocent, pleasures of this world above the happiness of the next, perfect though it be in degree, and eternal in duration ; and there is, probably, no season in which we are more keenly alive to the loveliness of nature, or the endearments of social life, than when recovering from sickness : when, after having been “ down to the gates of the grave,” we are restored to the friends and to the scenes upon which we had so lately expected to close our eyes for ever.

With such feelings was it, that the stranger looked forth, from the window of his apartment, upon the beauteous landscape which the glorious Spring, flinging her verdure over field and forest, had spread to his enraptured view. To him there was hope in the bursting blossom, music in the pebbly brook, and gladness in the breeze ; and when he turned from the contemplation of external nature, to the radiant countenance which was reflecting the delight that beamed in his own, he felt, in the ecstatic delusion of the moment, that earth, defaced as it was by human crime, and clouded by human suffering, had yet its Paradise !

But, while Gertrude was daily growing an object of greater regard in the eyes of the stranger, the grace of his manner, and the accomplishments of his mind, which every hour passed in his society tended to develop, began to win for him an interest in the heart of the young lady. Love, in fact, is an insidious, and not especially honourable, enemy, and usually has an ally in the citadel he attacks. Thus, in the instance before us, Pity was ready to open the door to Love in one bosom, and Gratitude to admit him into the other.

It is probable, that the gentleman had a presentiment of his danger; for, as soon as he was able to walk out, he intimated his intention of relieving his hospitable host of his company; but Mr. Thornhill, who had discovered those qualities in his guest which strengthened the interest excited, in the first instance, by his misfortune, was in no hurry to part from him.

The habits of his son Richard, even if he had been disposed to seek the society of his father, would have rendered his companionship rather a burthen than an acquisition; and thus Mr. Thornhill, who mingled but little among the neighbouring gentry, found, in the intelligence and agreeable conversation of his guest, a pleasure from which he had long been debarred, and which he could not endure the thought of resigning.

Yielding, therefore, to the entreaties of the father, backed by remonstrances, referring to the state of his health, from Gertrude, the visitor consented to prolong his stay for a few days;

during which period, much of his time was spent in her society ; and, when the state of the weather, or of his health, did not admit of their walking out, those mornings were passed in the study, a little apartment opening on the lawn of the mansion. It was there that the young stranger was wont to display his taste and erudition, by the selection of passages from the literature both of his own and other countries, to which he gave additional effect by the propriety and grace with which he read them.

It will, perhaps, be asked, why Mrs. Thornhill, who was not likely, in an inordinate admiration of the visitor's accomplishments, to overlook the probable consequences of such frequent interviews with her daughter, gave a tacit sanction to them ? That respectable matron, however, had her own reasons for not interfering in the matter. She had never loved her daughter, and, having latterly felt jealous of her charms, would have rejoiced at getting rid of her on any terms. She, therefore, experienced no anxiety as to the character of the stranger, caring little whether he was a beggar or a prince ; in fact, she would probably have rather been gratified by a *mesalliance* on the part of her daughter, as tending to remove her altogether from the sphere, in which her superior attractions were so obnoxious to her own vanity.

Mrs. Thornhill's behaviour towards their visitor, in the mean time, was courteous, but cold, as became a woman of the world, too cautious to





Engraved by F. Green.

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THE LOST DEED.

Page 22

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It was a calm and lovely evening, the stillness of which was interrupted only by the distant sheep-bell, and the ripple of the receding waters upon the beach. The time which the stranger had fixed for his departure was approaching; and that circumstance tended to cast a melancholy over the young pair, who were unusually silent. At length Gertrude remarked, with a sigh, which, gentle though it was, did not escape the notice of her companion, "And so you have resolved on quitting us."

"Yes, Miss Thornhill," was the reply; "and, in so resolving, have sacrificed my inclination to my duty, which requires my presence in another place; but, believe me, whenever or whatever



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I go, I shall bear with me a grateful recollection of the kindness and confidence with which, a nameless and friendless man, I have been treated under your father's roof."

"Nay, say not friendless," responded the lady; "for though you may not previously have had a friend in England, you have made one in my father; and," she added, with some hesitation, "my father's friends, you know, should be mine."

"To call Miss Thornhill my friend," said he, "even on her father's account, is a privilege of which I am not worthy; to hope for her friendship on my own, is a presumption of which I am guiltless; and dear to me will be the reflection, that she will sometimes remember me, when I shall have quitted the land of my birth, perhaps to visit it no more."

"And, in order that we may not forget you," rejoined the maiden, endeavouring, under an air of playfulness, to hide feelings which she found were getting the mastery of her, "you must visit Beechgrove again before you quit England."

"Beechgrove!" exclaimed the stranger, who, for the first time, heard the name of Mr. Thornhill's residence, and in whom the mention of it seemed to summon up some agitating recollections, of which Gertrude, regarding him with an expression of anxiety, appeared to ask an explanation; when the other continued,—

"Your pardon, Miss Thornhill; but an estate with the same appellation was the abode of my childhood: nay, when I look around, the scene

appears to be, in some sort, familiar to me; but the recollection is dim and indistinct, like the occurrences of an ill-remembered dream. The coincidence of the name, too, is singular, and yet it cannot be;—the property would still be in the family of Trevor."

" Trevor," said Gertrude, " is the family name of my father, who, some years since, assumed that of Thornhill."

" And these," exclaimed the stranger, " are the fair possessions from which the best of men was cast forth in his old age, while his son ——"

" His son?" inquired his companion, interrupting him in a voice betraying an agitation almost equal to his own: " I knew not that he had one. Is he in England?"

" Yes," was the answer; " and in your presence! the guest of one who has wrested from him his just inheritance;—yet not in your ears should the history of our wrongs be told."

" Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Gertrude; " it was to this, then, that the mysterious sayings of my father have referred! Often, when I have pointed out to him the beauty of the scenery, has he turned, as it were, heart-sick from the sight, exclaiming that the curse of an injured man was upon it, and made even its loveliness hateful to him. I know not, and—alas! that I should say so—fear to inquire, the merits of the law-suit by which he became possessed of the estate; but, O! Mr. Somerville, do not, by suddenly disclosing yourself, subject him to a shock, which,

in the present state of his health, would be fatal to him ! Remember ——”

“ I will remember,” said Somerville, “ that he is your father, and that mine has long since forgiven him the grievous wrong that made him a beggar.” With the understanding, therefore, that Somerville would not afford grounds for suspicion, by anticipating the period of his intended departure, whatever might be his ulterior views, the young pair returned to Beechgrove.

It may here be necessary that, retrograding some years in our narrative, we inform the reader, that the elder Somerville, on finding himself deprived of the fruits of many years’ frugality and labour, determined on quitting England and embarking for Amsterdam, in the hope that, through the influence of one of his oldest mercantile connexions in that city, he might be able to obtain some employment by which to support himself and his infant boy ; for, although considerably advanced in years, he was in the vigour of his intellect, and possessed a mind which, though adversity might depress, it could not overcome.

On his arrival at his destination, he waited upon Mynheer Van Bloemensteel, whom he found enjoying himself, *à la Hollandaise*, that is to say, smoking a pipe in a summer-house over a ditch, and perusing the most interesting book in a Dutch merchant’s library — his ledger. The worthy burgomaster, who was a bachelor, by the way, received his old correspondent with a

slight nod of recognition, as if twelve hours only, instead of as many years, had elapsed since they had met. He listened to the beginning of Somerville's recital with true Batavian phlegm, and, for aught I know, preserved his inflexibility of countenance to the end of it; but as it proceeded, he began to puff with such vigour and rapidity, as to render every feature in his face invisible to his visitor, who concluded by requesting employment in his counting-house. When he had finished his story, Van Bloemensteel thrust his hand through the cloud in which he had enshrined himself, and, taking that of his friend, told him, that he was glad to see him, and sorry for his misfortunes; that he had no vacancy for a clerk, but that he should be happy in the advantage of his experience in their business, of which he offered him a share.

Somerville, of course, accepted a proposal, the value of which was enhanced by the delicacy with which it was made, and soon found himself in circumstances which, though far from opulent, not only enabled him to live in respectability and comfort, but to secure to his son Edward the advantage of a superior education. In a mind so well regulated, and imbued with the principles of that religion of which he was a sincere though humble professor, the sense of injury soon lost its irritating influence; but, although he freely forgave the author of his misfortunes, he could not help breathing many a regretful sigh, at the remembrances of the lovely spot on which he

had once fondly hoped to pass the evening of his days.

His son, having been intended for the profession of physic, had completed his studies at the University of Leyden, when Mr. Somerville's health began to fail him, and, after many ineffectual attempts, on the part of the medical practitioners of Amsterdam, to restore him, he was recommended to try the effect of his native air, and Edward was accordingly despatched to England for the purpose of selecting a fitting residence, to which it was proposed to remove his father when the spring had further advanced. The younger Somerville, unused to the sea, became so affected by the voyage, that, when the vessel was wrecked, he was, as we have related, unable effectually to avail himself of the means provided for his escape, and, but for the skill and intrepidity of honest Benjamin, would have perished within sight of his paternal home.

CHAPTER III.

WITHIN about an hour of sunset, on a fine evening during the period in which the events recorded in the preceding chapters occurred, a well-mounted horseman was riding leisurely through a forest lying between Romsey and Winchester, and, doubtless, well known to many

of my readers as the forest of Amphiel. When he arrived about midway, he struck into a bridle path which diverged from the high road, and terminated in an opening, or clearing, made by the felling of a number of large oak trees that were still lying upon the ground.

The rider, after glancing around the opening, dismounted, and, turning his horse to graze on the verdant spot, seated himself upon one of the fallen trees, and remained, for some time, in a thoughtful posture, occasionally raising his eyes towards a path on the opposite side of the space, as if expecting the approach of some person in that direction. After the lapse of about half an hour, the sound of a horse's hoof was audible, and another horseman entered the area, whose steed and apparel formed a wretched contrast to the appointments of the other.

The person who had last arrived was a man between forty and fifty, with a countenance on which villain was written in very legible characters, and whose general appearance indicated that he had thriven badly in his trade. His features were strongly marked, and his complexion of a ghastly whiteness. His lips were thin and colourless, his nose was like a hawk's bill, and his forehead projected considerably over his eyes, which were dark and sparkling, and flashed ominously from behind his bent and bushy brows. His person was spare even to meagreness, and his face was thin, parched, and poverty-smitten. He was attired in a coarse and thread-bare great-

coat, that appeared to have been worn less as a protection against the weather, which was unusually mild, than to hide the dilapidations in his under apparel. His hat was discoloured and indented, and dropped upon his brows in a manner which plainly indicated that he was not its original proprietor.

The meeting was, of course, preconcerted, but it took place without salutation on either side.

"Well, Master Fenton," said the horseman who had appeared first on the ground, in no very complacent tone, "methinks you might have named some nearer place of rendezvous, and saved me an eight-miles ride through a cross country, at the peril of my neck, and with the probability of being benighted on my return."

"It may be very well for you to talk thus, Master Richard," was the reply, "who may travel by high-way or bye-way, according to your good pleasure; but it might have occurred to you that it would scarcely consist with my safety, or even, I speak it under favour, with your convenience, to have discussed the matter in hand in the town-hall or the market-place at Southampton."

"But you might have named the abbey, or the wood in which it stands," rejoined the first speaker, who, it is scarcely necessary to inform the reader, was no other than the younger Thornhill.

"Yes," answered Fenton, "with the chance, amounting almost to a certainty, of encountering my old acquaintance, Benjamin Bight, who has

promised to adjust the little account between us, in a fashion which will accord better with his ancient calling than the safety of my bones."

"Well," said Richard, "after having brought me all this distance, methinks you might have observed your appointment a little better, and not have kept me waiting here this half hour."

"Perhaps," replied Fenton, "if I had been mounted on that blood mare of your's, and you on the piece of carrion which I could have carried on my own back almost as quickly as I have travelled on his, I should have had the pleasure of waiting for you."

"And since we have met," pursued the other, "pray what is the mighty secret which you have feared to breathe in any ears than mine and the rooks'?"

"Simply," was the answer, "that young Somerville is in England."

"The foul fiend catch him," was the pious ejaculation with which this piece of intelligence was greeted.

"Possibly the foul fiend may," said the other, "but, since he will use his good pleasure as to the time, I would counsel you to watch the youngster's motions in the interim."

"In order, however, to do which," remarked the young man, "I should know in what part of England he is. Is it far or near?"

"Nearer than you imagine," responded Fenton.

"As how?" inquired Richard.

"Under your own roof!" was the answer.

"What! the shipwrecked stranger, who passes under the name of Walton?" exclaimed the other.

"The same," said Fenton.

"Would that he had gone to the bottom of the sea! where, but for that officious old rascal, Bight, he would have been food for fishes by this time. But in what shape," continued Thornhill, "do you apprehend the mischief of his visit to England is likely to assail us?"

"Why," rejoined Fenton, "as I have often told you, for you were too young to be able now to remember any thing of the circumstances, the witnesses who, in addition to the abstraction of the deed, served our turn upon the trial, have been subpœnaed to the other world, and should this slip of a youth choose to rip open the old grievance, I am not so certain that we should get a verdict."

"But old Somerville," said Richard, "was beggared by the loss of the estate, and died, as we have heard, abroad, and it is scarcely probable that this scapegrace of his will be able to find money or friends to prosecute his claim."

"Recollect," replied the other, "that some years have passed over his head since you last had tidings of his family. You know not what he may have acquired in the interim, and, until you ascertain him to be weak, it behoves you to deal with him as if he were strong."

"But what," asked Thornhill, "would you have me do with him?"

“Denounce him to the government as a spy,” was the suggestion of his conscientious adviser, “alleging his assumption of a feigned name as proof of his guilt, and should the evidence which we can muster be not enough to hang him, it may yet be sufficient to send him out of the country faster than he came into it.”

“Nay, Fenton,” remarked the other, “that plan will never do.”

“Wherefore not?” inquired Fenton.

“Why you know as well as I,” was the answer, “that the possession of the Beechgrove property has never sat easy upon my father’s qualmish conscience, and now he has turned driveller in his old age, and talks of restitution, from which I have cause to think that not even my mother’s authority would withhold him, if he knew that young Somerville, of whose death he has been assured, was in existence; therefore, as long as the gentleman chooses to preserve his incognito, for which he has doubtless special reasons, it does not become me to violate it. I think, Fenton, that a man of your ingenuity should be able to devise some safer and more direct plan to rid us of the presence of this unwelcome visitor.”

“I do not see your drift,” remarked Fenton.

“Nay,” said the other, producing a well-filled purse, by way of a current commentary on his text, “you are grown dull of late. This young gentleman is as sentimental as a milliner, and is

given to walking in the woods and by the sea-side ;—do you understand me now ?”

“ If I do,” replied the other, “ you seem to forget that I have a conscience.”

“ A conscience !” retorted Richard, scornfully ; “ it well becomes you to boast of having a conscience.”

“ And if I have not,” rejoined Fenton, somewhat fiercely, “ I have that which will admonish you to use the language of civility towards one by whose crimes, be they what they may, you and yours have profited a thousand-fold more than I who have to answer for them.”

“ What ! villain,” rejoined Thornhill, pointing to a brace of pistols in his girdle, “ do you threaten ? remember, I am armed.”

“ And so am I,” replied the other, coolly, “ although I do not put it in my adversary’s power to master my weapon by carrying it on my person.”

“ What mean you ?” inquired Thornhill,

“ *The lost deed !*” was the answer.

“ Which,” said Richard, “ you, long ago, promised to deliver up to us.”

“ Your memory is treacherous,” rejoined Fenton, “ and retains not your part of the contract, which was to pay over to me a certain sum as a consideration for the surrender, and, until that be forthcoming, you will excuse me for holding the document as the best possible security for the punctual payment of the pittance assigned to me in the interim.”

"Nay, my good friend," replied Thornhill, in a more softened tone, "you must wait—have patience, and you shall be paid. My father cannot live for ever, and when I come into possession of the estate, the money shall be yours. In the mean time, however, this intruder must be disposed of."

"By what means," enquired Fenton, "do you propose to do it?"

"Why, if you had not been so hasty," said his companion, "I should have explained to you. Your friend, the American trader, I understand, is in port, and on the eve of sailing. He is not over scrupulous, you know, and I see nothing to prevent his boat's crew from snapping up this young gentleman, in one of his strolls along the beach, and shipping him off for a country where live lumber like himself is at a premium. What think you of the plan?"

"I see but one objection to it," responded the other.

"And pray what may that be?" said Richard.

"The absence of a motive for my friend's incurring the risk and trouble which the experiment would necessarily involve," was the reply.

"Well, we will obviate that difficulty," rejoined Thornhill, "by supplying him with a motive which, I doubt not, he will deem sufficiently weighty. Take this purse, make the best arrangement you can with him, and as soon as I am certified of his success, a similar reward shall be yours."

Fenton took the purse with a sullen indifference, which implied a conviction that the reward proposed was barely equivalent to the service required; and the confederates, who had met without greeting, parted without adieu, each taking the path by which he had arrived at the place of rendezvous.

One word in illustration of the character of one of the colloquists here introduced, before we dismiss him to the concoction of measures to carry into effect the iniquitous will of his employer.

Owen Fenton, although born of parents in very humble circumstances, had, by some means or other, with which we are not acquainted, contrived to pick up a tolerable education. He was placed, at an early age, in the office of a solicitor in a country town, where he distinguished himself by his quickness and the display of qualifications which are rarely found in persons in similar employments. In a few years, he acquired the confidence of his master, but, having formed an improper connexion, he, by degrees, became extravagant in his habits, and, by consequence, involved in difficulties, from which he was unable to extricate himself.

At this juncture, unfortunately for himself, he was brought under the notice of Mrs. Trevor, who, having acquired a knowledge of his difficulties, determined to render them subservient to her purposes, and, in the end, prevailed upon him, by promises of a large pecuniary reward, to abstract from the deeds of the Beechgrove

property, the instrument by which it was conveyed to Mr. Somerville. To do this, without risk of detection, was a task which to Fenton, who had the immediate care of the papers, and was therefore accountable for their safe custody, was of no easy accomplishment. The better, therefore, to cover the nefarious act, he set fire to the house of his master, and thus shifted the responsibility from himself to those who, in the confusion of the event, were employed in saving the documents of the office.

Mrs. Trevor, however, who did not meet with that unscrupulous co-operation from her husband on which she had calculated, but, on the contrary, had great difficulty in prevailing on him to commence proceedings for gaining possession of an estate to which his conscience told him he had not, in point of justice, the shadow of a claim, deemed it impolitic to increase his repugnance by disclosing Fenton's instrumentality in the transaction; which she must necessarily have done in claiming for the latter the stipulated reward of his treachery. Thus it happened that, in lieu of the promised sum, she was compelled to assign to him, out of her own allowance, which was handsome, an annuity that, added to his occasional extortions, amounted to a somewhat exorbitant rate of interest on the money withheld.

Mrs. Trevor, as well as her son, when he was old enough to be taken into her counsels, had made several ineffectual attempts to obtain the deed; but Fenton, who, as he intimated in the

conversation which we have related, knew that in that instrument he possessed the best possible security for the payment of his allowance, had peremptorily refused to part from it, without receiving the gratuity originally agreed upon between them.

It rarely happens that the gold which is acquired by crime is expended with prudence, and thus it occurred that Fenton's irregularities increased with the means of indulging his depraved propensities, and his discharge from his situation was the result.

From that period his life was an uninterrupted course of crime ; but the ways of vice he found were not those of pleasantness, and, in aggravation of the poverty to which his profligate habits frequently reduced him, he suffered the mental torture of one who, having, in early life, been instructed in the truths of religion, could not expunge from his memory or his creed God's denunciation against "every soul of man that doeth evil" Like the devils, he believed, trembled, and despaired. The fierce agony of his spirit sprang not from remorse, still less from penitence, since it was the result not of a hatred of his crimes, but a dread of their consequences ;—he grieved not that he had offended God, but that he had provoked Him ; while the busy fiend, who had tempted him to sin, inspired him with the assurance that for him there was no forgiveness, and thus, hopeless of pardon, he became reckless of crime.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the evening previous to the day which he had fixed for his departure, Somerville, who had long felt a desire to visit the celebrated abbey of Netley, resolved on availing himself of the only opportunity which would probably occur to him of inspecting those venerable and magnificent ruins. It happened that Mr. Thornhill had experienced an attack of a malady to which he was subject, and Gertrude, who was, on such occasions, his only nurse, remained in attendance upon him, so that Somerville set out upon his excursion alone.

The latter part of his journey was through a wood of considerable extent, on emerging from which, he found himself in sight of the abbey, lifting its grey and lichenized front on his right, while, at his left hand, and close to the beach, stood the castle, between which, although some hundred yards asunder, it is supposed there was originally a subterranean communication; indeed there are vestiges, to this day, which seem to warrant this hypothesis.

Even at that period Time had done much, and the cupidity of some of its proprietors not a little, towards the destruction of this celebrated edifice, of which, when the author last visited it, there was but a small portion that boasted a roof.

Indeed Nature appears to be reclaiming the territory of which the pious munificence of former ages had robbed her, and where the pillar once raised its sculptured capital, the tall ash tree is towering above the ruin.

With feelings deeply imbued with the solemnity which the contemplation of the relics of other and far remote ages is calculated to inspire, Somerville slowly paced through the ruin. "And this," thought he, "was the abode of those mistaken pietists, who, in seeking the seclusion of the cloister, forgot that the world was made for man, as well as man for the world; and that, in contracting the sphere of their usefulness, they were opposing the design of their Creator, who made man a social animal. True it is, they shut the door upon the world, but could they exclude the passions which deform and agitate it? Had not ambition still its mark, anger its excitement, and envy its food?"

He was roused from these meditations by a slight noise, and, on looking up to ascertain the cause, he beheld an armed man in the act of leaping from a kind of arched communication between an adjoining apartment, and the chapel in which he was standing. Somerville stepped back, somewhat startled at such an apparition, as well as the manner of its approach, but recovered his composure on perceiving that it was his old acquaintance Mr. Bight, upon whose reluctant acceptance, it should be mentioned, he had previously forced a token of his gratitude for rescuing

him from a watery grave. The tar returned Somerville's greeting by slightly touching his hat, but spoke not until he approached his ear, when, looking cautiously around him, he said, in a low and confidential tone, "There's a pirate to windward; so take my advice, put the ship about, and bear up for the nearest port with every stitch of canvass."

"What mean you, my friend?" returned Somerville, not comprehending the other's drift.

"Why," explained Benjamin, "that half a dozen lubbers have been reconnoitring you ever since you entered the wood."

"You must have mistaken their object, Mr. Bight," was the rejoinder, "they can have no design upon me. Who or what are they?"

"They belong to a rakish looking lugger that's been standing off and on in the bay there for the last two glasses, and there's two of the crew in the long-boat, lying upon their oars, within a cable's length of the beach. The devil's cubs have mischief in their heads, depend on it."

Somerville, deeming it prudent to take Benjamin's advice, commenced his retreat, but before he could effect it, a party of sailors, six in number, and armed with cutlasses, rushed into the chapel, and immediately surrounding him, called on him to surrender.

Deeming their object to be plunder, and seeing the utter futility of resistance, Somerville drew his purse from his pocket, and proffered it to his assailants, who, however, soon gave him to

understand that it was his person, and not his purse, which they wished to secure.

On his demanding the meaning of the outrage, they merely answered, that their captain desired to speak with him, and that he must accompany them to the boat, whither they proceeded to drag him.

Ben Bight, however, who, before the appearance of the party, had begun to retire by another route, now faced about, and was making up to them, when one of the ruffians called out, "Avast, messmate! and don't meddle in matters that don't concern you. So sheer off, while you can do so in a whole skin."

Benjamin, however, with an apostrophe to the other's impudence in hailing him "messmate," made a blow at him with his cutlass, and a fierce encounter took place between the veteran and two of the gang; while the other four dragged Somerville out of the chapel, and hurried away in the direction of the shore. Bight, who had distinguished himself frequently in a boarding party when on service, was an adept in the use of his weapon, and his superiority in this respect alone enabled him to keep his antagonists at bay; but two to one were fearful odds, and he was compelled to give ground at every blow. In this manner he continued to retreat, until he reached the altar, at the foot of which was a flight of narrow steps, leading to the top of the walls, but which had, probably, once communicated with the dormitory of the monks. At this juncture, the veteran tar, taking advantage of a stumble which

one of his assailants made over a part of the ruin, aimed a furious blow at the other, to avoid which the latter retreated a step, when Benjamin darted up the stairs, and made his way along the wall. Finding himself, however, closely followed, he turned upon the foremost of his pursuers, and, at the distance of about six yards, drew his pistol, which he had not time to use before, and fired. The ruffian uttered a heavy groan, and fell from the fearful height into the chapel, a mangled and lifeless corpse. The other opponent, seeing the fate of his comrade, hesitated for a moment, when our gallant tar, profiting by the pause, flung himself upon the branch of a tree, which nearly touched the building, and thus made his way down its trunk to the ground.

In the mean time, the other four of the lugger's party were occupied in conveying Somerville to the boat, which, he being a muscular man, was a task of no easy accomplishment. He struggled desperately, and, more than once, had well nigh freed himself from his captors, who, at length, forced a handkerchief into his mouth, which not only prevented him from calling for assistance, but tended to render his exertions more exhausting. His resistance, however ineffectual in regaining his liberty, tended to impede their progress towards the beach, on arriving at which, they rushed with him through the shallow water, in order to gain the boat, whose navigators, perceiving the success of their comrades, were pulling in-shore.

Benjamin had no sooner gained his feet, than he made off in the direction of the sea, and, on discovering the situation of Somerville, his first impulse appeared to have been to rush to his rescue; but abandoning the attempt, almost immediately, he turned aside, and running along the shingle, passed the party at the distance of a few yards, and speedily gained the hulk in which he lived. He made his entrance through an aperture in her side, and, with him, vanished the hopes of poor Somerville, who had anxiously watched the tar's flight. Bight, however, as it turned out, did not so soon abandon the cause, for he shortly reappeared at the stern of his vessel, with a lighted match in his hand; and, freeing a swivel gun, which was there mounted, from the leaden wrapper which protected the touch-hole, he ran his eye along the piece, and seemed to be pointing it with the greatest nicety.

By this time, the boat had approached within a few yards of the spot where the ruffians, who had been joined by Benjamin's remaining antagonist, were standing, up to their waists in water, with Somerville in their arms, ready to embark; while the lugger was standing in-shore as closely as she dared, so that the boat, when she should have received her living cargo, might have as short a distance as possible to pull. The boat had just mounted the crest of a wave, which the next instant would have swept her to the side of the crew who were waiting to board her, when the report of a gun was heard, and a

shot, striking her a-midships, between wind and water, passed in at her larboard and out at her starboard side, and she went down in a moment.

A loud *hurra!* proclaimed Benjamin's satisfaction at the success of his manœuvre, while the ruffians had nothing left them but to retreat to the beach, with their prey, until the lugger could despatch another boat to their assistance. By the time, however, that they had regained the shore, the report of the swivel had communicated an alarm along the coast, and Somerville's captors, perceiving *Eight* making signals to some fishermen who were hastening towards the spot, abandoned their prize, and, having succeeded in reaching a distant point of land before they could be intercepted, were taken up by a boat from their vessel; while Somerville, with no other injury than a ducking, having expressed his gratitude to Benjamin for his rescue, proceeded on his return to Beechgrove.

The day which had been fixed for Edward's departure having arrived, he set out for London, for the purpose of transacting some business with which he had been entrusted by his father, bearing with him something more than the regrets of the lovely Gertrude; whose artless bosom, at the moment of parting, betrayed the interest with which the young and accomplished stranger had inspired it, and thus elicited from him an avowal of a reciprocal feeling which his previous deportment had, for some time, evinced.

Mr. Thornhill, meanwhile, continued to suffer from the malady to which he was subject, and

the last attack was not only of longer duration, and greater severity, than any that had preceded it, but began to make those inroads upon his constitution which inspired him with serious alarm for the issue. It was at this juncture that he received a letter from a correspondent abroad, whom he had, without the privity of his family, commissioned to make inquiry after Mr. Somerville, of whose death, as well as his son's, Mrs. Thornhill and Richard had endeavoured, unsuccessfully it would appear, to persuade him. The communication thus received was to the effect, that the elder Somerville had, for some years, been engaged, under a different name, in business at Amsterdam ; and that his son was then in London, and might be heard of at the correspondents of the firm in which his father was a partner.

This information, arriving at a period at which Mr. Thornhill was looking forward, with feelings of acute apprehension and the bitterest remorse, to the speedy coming of the day in which he should "be summoned to give an account of his deeds done in the flesh," determined him on making the only atonement in his power to the family he had so deeply injured, by renouncing the estate in their favour. The intimation of his resolve was received with surprise and consternation by Mrs. Thornhill, who immediately applied herself, by every art of persuasion and remonstrance, to shake his determination ; but the fears which were gathering upon his spirit on the brink

of the grave, prevailed over the obedience which he was wont to yield to her, and he addressed a letter to his solicitor expressive of his intention, and requesting that he would come himself, or send some confidential person, to Beechgrove, without delay, in order that the necessary document might be prepared and executed. His reply to the representations of his wife were to the effect, that the property which he had enjoyed in her right, and which, at his death, would revert to her and to her children, was sufficient to maintain them in comfort; and that there was, consequently, no plea on which he could be excused from performing an act of justice, that, to the peril of his eternal happiness, he had too long delayed.

There was one, however, in that house, who heard of Mr. Thornhill's resolution with feelings far different from those which his wife and his son experienced on the occasion. Gertrude, who, from certain expressions of her father, had long suspected, and, when those suspicions had been resolved into conviction, bitterly mourned, the injustice of which he had been guilty, would have advocated the act of restitution with all her eloquence and energy, even though its effect might be to cast her a beggar upon the bleak high-way of the world.

CHAPTER V.

ON the Surrey side of the Thames, between the Southwark and London bridges, there stood, until within these last few months, an obscure street, that, although extremely narrow, was composed of very high and somewhat spacious houses; each of which, from its external appearance, and the wretched condition of its inhabitants, might not unaptly be termed the palace of misery. It is into an upper apartment of one of these dwellings that I am now about to introduce the reader.

The room was the depth of the house, and half the width of it, while the paucity of its furniture, which consisted of a table, two crazy chairs, and a wretched pallet, augmented the size of it to the eye. The casements, of which there were two, had suffered considerably from time, accident, and the weather. Some of the apertures had been closed up with coarse paper, while fragments of tattered apparel were hung up before, or thrust through, the rest. The plaster had fallen from the ceiling, as well as from the walls, and leaving the rafters and the bricks bare in many places, added, not a little, to the comfortless appearance of the chamber.

In one corner of the room, with his elbows on the table, and his hands clenched upon his

forehead, sat a man, upon whose cheek time, want, and the conflict of evil passions, had wrought their havoc ; and, near the window, catching the last light of the receding day, was a female, employed in repairing some article of her apparel, the gaudy finery of which heightened, by contrast, the wretchedness of the scene. She was somewhat younger than her companion, and had yet the traces, I might almost say the skeleton, of beauty, from which she seemed reluctant to sever, for the hand of art had tinged the cheek to which the hue of health and the blush of shame had long been aliens.

“ And is it for this,” soliloquized Fenton, for it was he, looking up, for the first time for a considerable period, and striking his hands upon the table with a violence that startled his companion, “ is it for this that I have bartered my peace on earth and my happiness in heaven ? Have I toiled so long in the field of crime only to make misery my harvest ? But the die is cast, and as I have been the willing, so am I the fettered slave of sin. I feel her adamantine chain upon my spirit, paralyzing its energies, and dragging it down to that abyss which is gaping to receive it ; and I know that, with a recurrence of temptation, will come a recurrence of crime ! O that there were oblivion in the grave, and that I could lie there, like the clod of the valley, to melt with the fervent heat of a dissolving world ! ”

“ Why, Owen ! ” exclaimed the female, who, though she had seen him in many a fit of moody

musing, had never before heard him give vent to his feelings in words, “you are grown quite chicken-hearted. Have done with this drivelling nonsense, and be a man!”

“Peace, hag!” cried Owen, in a tone of fierceness which checked the ebullitions of the other’s rising wrath, “but for thee, and thine extravagance, I had never listened to the voice of the fiend in the guise of thy false sex, who chose the fitting hour to tempt me to my ruin. But for thee, I had never injured the best of masters and the kindest of friends, nor made an honest man a beggar, to glut a villain with the spoil.”

“Nay, Owen,” said the female, soothingly, “you were not wont to chide me thus. Come, come,—you have been out all day, and have fasted long; let me prepare your supper.”

“Thou sayest well, Meg,” rejoined Fenton, with a bitter smile, “and we will feast high;—behold the means!” and he flung down upon the table an empty purse; “know, too, for your further comfort, that yon surly brute below threatens to thrust us forth from this den of ours, which he thinks too good for those who cannot pay the rent. He comes to keep his word,” he added, as a step was heard ascending the stairs, but, instead of the dreaded visitor, the door opened and discovered Richard Thornhill.

“Ha! the tempter, and at the fitting time,” exclaimed Owen, as his guest entered.

“You do well to begin first,” said the latter, “after the clumsy manner in which your friends

let their prey slip through their fingers on the beach, the other day."

"And why blame me for that?" inquired Fenton. "The scheme was your own; and that it failed was no fault of those who took it in hand. They did their best, and would have succeeded, but for that meddling Bight and his long swivel. If poor Sam Shark had had his will, the sea-monster would have been food for worms by this time."

"But Benjamin," said Richard, "anticipating his friendly intentions, has made worms' meat of him. 'Twas the fortune of war, and there's nothing more to be said about it. But I have news for you."

"And another job, I suppose," replied Fenton, gloomily.

"Aye," was the answer, "but it will be the last, and then the long-promised reward will be yours."

"As how?" asked the other.

"You must know then, that my father is on his death bed, and, in a fit of compunction, has resolved on renouncing the estate in favour of the Somervilles, who, father and son, he has just heard, are alive."

"A flattering prospect truly," remarked Fenton, "for both of us. If you had no better news than that, methinks you might have spared yourself the journey."

"Nay, hear me out," replied Thornhill, "and you will judge. My father having made up his

mind to the measure, no persuasion or remonstrances could turn him aside, but he wrote off immediately to his attorney, in London, to come, or send a competent person to prepare the deed, which he purposed to put into the hands of young Somerville himself. Now, lest the letter should miscarry, I intercepted it on its way to the post, and took charge of it myself."

"With the pious intention of delivering it as addressed," observed Fenton, drily.

"Nay," continued his tempter, "I have a better plan than that. Do you proceed instantly to Beechgrove, and, taking the letter as your credentials, represent yourself to my father as the factotum of his lawyer; and, by drawing the deed in such a manner that it will not hold water, you will secure the possession of the estate to me, the reward to yourself, and quiet the old man's conscience into the bargain."

"And thus to cheat your father upon his death bed! an admirable scheme, and worthy alike of your genius and affection!" exclaimed Fenton.

"I asked not for your comments, but your concurrence," was the rejoinder; "what say you? you surely will not hesitate to make the last throw, with the certainty that the stakes will be your own."

"Nay," said Fenton, pointing to the purse which he had just before flung upon the table, "with yon empty emblem of my fortunes before me, I have no choice; and for the rest, there are

crimes enough upon my soul to sink it to the lowest pit of hell ; it can go no deeper."

" Spoken like yourself," rejoined young Thornhill, as he supplied his myrmidon with the means of prosecuting his journey to Beechgrove, and making his appearance there in a decent garb ; " see that you start early on the morrow ; I will set out to-night, lest the coincidence of our arrival excite suspicion."

On the second day after the interview which we have just described, Owen Fenton made his appearance at Beechgrove, where he was received by its mistress and her hopeful son as a perfect stranger ; and, on being furnished with written instructions as to the intention of Mr. Thornhill, he applied himself to the drawing up of the deed, in which it was no difficult task to hide, under the unintelligible jargon and endless periphrase of legal composition, the flaw that was to render the instrument utterly worthless.

When, however, the wretched pettifogger was introduced into the presence of the person whose penitential design he had taken measures to frustrate, and upon whose brow the angel of death had set his mark in characters not to be mistaken, he half repented him of his purpose ; and had his interview with Mr. Thornhill preceded, instead of following, the preparation of the document, his participation in that act of villainy would probably not have been added to the dark catalogue of Fenton's crimes. He had, however, gone too far to recede, and, although his hand trembled more

violently than the feeble fingers in which he placed the pen to sign the deed, he contrived to superintend the mockery of its execution without exciting suspicion.

Within four-and-twenty hours after the paper was signed, Edward Somerville received a letter, which had been addressed to the care of his father's correspondents in London, charging him, as he would smooth the pillow of a dying and conscience-stricken man, to repair without delay to Beechgrove. The communication had no signature, but he had no difficulty in recognizing the hand-writing, which was that of Gertrude; and, obeying the injunction with all practicable expedition, soon found himself by the bedside of the sick man.

Miss Thornhill had anticipated her father's surprise, by previously informing him of the identity of his late guest with the son of the person he had injured, but his feelings were dreadfully excited when Edward entered the chamber. In a few faintly uttered sentences Mr. Thornhill explained to his visitor, that, from the moment of his assumption of the estate, he had never known a happy hour; that he had felt its possession a curse upon his soul, of which he would long since have relieved it, by surrendering the ill-acquired property, had he not received apparently well authenticated accounts of the death of Mr. Somerville and his son, whose forgiveness he implored; and concluded by placing in Edward's hands the document in

which he renounced his title to the estate in their favour.

Edward soothed the dying man with the assurance that he had long ago been forgiven by his father, and that, for himself, he entertained towards him no other feelings than those of perfect charity ; and if proof of his sincerity were wanting, it was abundantly supplied by the fervency with which the young man subsequently joined in the prayers which our church has appointed for the solemn occasion. The minister who officiated was a man whose zeal for his Master's service was tempered with discretion, and who, while he boldly denounced the vengeance of God against the hardened and impenitent, was ever ready to apply the blessed consolations of the Gospel to the broken in spirit. In the instance to which we now refer, to have brandished the terrors of the Lord before a man whose spirit was about to take its flight, would have availed but little ; and, therefore, he sought rather for those points in his case on which he could ground a promise of pardon and peace.

Mr. Thornhill had been a grievous sinner, and the consciousness of his crime, until he had renounced its fruits, weighed so heavily upon his soul that he could not lift it up to God in prayer ; but when he had performed the act of restitution, his mind was relieved, and the last moments of his life were marked by that sorrow which springs from a hatred of the sin, and not purely from a dread of its punishment. Of all that has

been said of a death-bed repentance, the essence may be summed in a few words: that it is wise to distrust, and presumptuous to deny its efficacy.

In a few hours after Mr. Thornhill had placed the document referred to in the hands of Edward Somerville, he breathed his last, and that young gentleman, whose sense of the delicate position in which the possession of that instrument placed him with the family, prevailed over his desire of remaining to console the heart-broken Gertrude, took his departure for the metropolis.

Unwilling to excite expectations in the mind of his father, which might not be justified by the event, Edward deferred communicating to him the step which Mr. Thornhill had taken in his favour, until he should be able to write with more certainty on the subject. After waiting for a period, during which the feelings of the deceased gentleman's family might be supposed to be tranquillized, and their affairs in some sort arranged, he addressed a letter to Richard Thornhill, referring to the deed which his father had executed, and expressing his willingness to make the time and manner of the surrender of the estate conform to the convenience of its present occupants.

To this communication Edward received a reply, through Thornhill's solicitor, to the effect that the instrument in question was executed by his father at a time when the state of his mind rendered him incompetent to any legal act, and that it was the intention of the family to resist

any proceedings upon it to the last shilling of their means.

Under these circumstances, there was nothing left for Edward but to resort to his attorney, to whose inspection he accordingly submitted the deed, on which it was proposed to claim the restitution of the Beechgrove property. From this gentleman, after the lapse of a few days, he received the astounding intelligence, that the deed had been worded in such a manner as utterly to defeat the object for which it purported to be made; and that there were grounds for believing that this nullification was the result rather of design than accident, on the part of the person who drew it.

Grievous as was Edward's mortification at this overthrow of hopes, which he had indulged rather on account of the gratification which the restitution of the estate would afford to his father, than of the prospective advantage to himself, he instantly acquitted the late Mr. Thornhill of any participation in the fraud, if such it were, as the latter could not but have known, that, in practising such a deception, he would have lied, not unto man, but unto God.

Comforting himself, therefore, on the only ground of congratulation which the subject afforded, namely, that he had not, by a premature communication to his father of the apparently favourable change in the posture of his affairs, exposed him to a bitter disappointment, Edward applied himself to the main object of his

mission to England, and began to make inquiries after a fitting residence for his venerable parent; the period which the latter had fixed for his voyage being near at hand.

CHAPTER VI.

THE sun had just sunk beneath the horizon, when, with a step so soft that it awoke not an echo in the venerable fane, Owen Fenton entered the chapel of Netley Abbey; and, after a cursory glance around the space which it enclosed, took his seat upon the steps on the right of the altar. He came in conformity with an appointment, made by Richard Thornhill, for the purpose of exchanging the lost deed for the reward which had so long been promised to him, and which the death of the late proprietor of Beechgrove had put it into the power of his son to bestow. No minor inducement, it is conceived, would have prevailed upon Fenton to venture into the vicinity of Benjamin Bight, who, for some cause, which, in the course of this narrative, the former is represented to have alluded to but not explained, had long owed him a grudge.

In other respects, however, the time and place which had been fixed upon for the rendezvous, was admirably adapted for the purposes of their

meeting, since the awe with which the extravagant traditions that had gained currency relative to the Abbey, had inspired the neighbouring peasantry, effectually secured them against interruption from that quarter after sunset; while those who were wont to repair to the ruins, either on an excursion of pleasure, or for the purpose of antiquarian investigation, usually chose an earlier hour in the day for their visit.

Fenton had waited a considerable period after the hour appointed, and was beginning to entertain an apprehension that the shades of evening might gather around the place ere the expected visitor would arrive, and thus materially interfere with the adjustment of the account between them, when Richard Thornhill made his appearance at the opposite side of the chapel.

“ Well,” said the latter, as he approached, “ you are here I see; have you brought the deed?”

“ I have,” was the answer.

“ Produce it then,” rejoined the other.

“ There,” continued Fenton, advancing to one of the many masses of ruin which lay scattered over the area of the chapel, and by the side of another of which, a few paces distant, Thornhill had taken his stand, “ there lies the deed; do you tell me down the money on the flat stone before you, and when you quit your post, I will quit mine.” As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a skin of parchment, and laid it on the fragment of the wall behind which he stood,

keeping his hand, however, firmly pressed upon the document.

"Do you doubt me, Fenton?" was Richard's inquiry, when he perceived that, by the arrangement proposed, the money and the deed could not, at the same time, be in the power of either party, inasmuch as the parchment and the gold would be abandoned at the same moment; each person having the same distance to traverse, in order to gain the object desired; while hesitation or retreat, on the one hand, would be checked by a corresponding and simultaneous movement on the other, and thus would the exchange be effected upon equal terms. "Do you doubt me?" Thornhill repeated.

"I do," replied the other, calmly, "and, therefore, will not be trifled with."

"Nor did I come here to trifle, be assured, Owen; and yet, methinks, you might, in your arrangement, have placed me on an equal footing, in point of security, with yourself. When I have told down the money, you can have no doubt of the genuineness of the coin, but what assurance have I that the parchment you have produced is the identical deed?"

"My word," responded Fenton.

"I do but return your compliment, Owen," said Thornhill, "in saying, that I deem the pledge none of the safest."

"Perhaps not," rejoined the other, "but you must be content with it, nevertheless."

"And wherefore, I pray you?" asked Thornhill.

" Because you have no choice," was the answer.

" But what if I refuse to deal with you on such terms ? " inquired Richard.

" I will then take my wares to another market," observed Fenton, coolly, " and see what price I can get from Mr. Somerville ; so say at once, am I to have my reward from you, or not ? "

" Take it," exclaimed Thornhill, thrusting his hand into his bosom, and, drawing thence a pistol, before the other was aware of his design, or had time to frustrate it, presented it at Fenton's head, and pulled the trigger.

The spark, however, merely consumed the priming of the pistol, producing what is called a flash in the pan, when Fenton drew from his coat a dirk, with which, in anticipation, probably, of the other's treachery, or with a view of defending himself, in the event of a hostile encounter with his old enemy, Bight, he rushed upon Thornhill, exclaiming, " Villain, I have thee in my power ! "

Richard was a muscular young man, and, in point of strength, more than a match for his antagonist, whose first thrust he contrived to avoid ; when they closed, and a desperate struggle was the result, in the course of which they shifted their ground to some distance from the spot whereon it commenced, and, at last, stumbling over a fragment of masonry, they both fell to the ground.

At this juncture, a third party made his appearance on the field of action, in the person of

Bight, who, having watched his old acquaintance, Fenton, into the Abbey, and, suspecting that the visit was for no honest purpose, had followed him unperceived, and had taken up a position in which he overheard the conversation we have described.

During the fierce encounter between Fenton and his opponent, Benjamin emerged from his hiding place, and, advancing to the spot on which the parchment had been left, he stretched his fowling-piece across it, and called on the parties to desist, under pain of a broadside; by which, it is presumed, he meant the discharge of both barrels of his gun at once.

As if by mutual consent, the combatants started simultaneously on their feet, and no sooner did they perceive the object, in which their contest originated, in the possession of another, than each asserted his claim to it.

“ Give me my deed !” exclaimed Thornhill.

“ It is mine !” vociferated Fenton.

Bight, however, in reply, gave them to understand, that, as he attached an equal degree of credit to their asseverations, he could not, in justice, surrender it either to one or the other; and that, as the property claimed by both might chance to belong to neither, he should e'en take it up to the admiral, in order that “ his honour might overhaul it.”

This intimation was, evidently, little relished by the parties to whom it was addressed, and who appeared disposed to make common cause

for the recovery of the captured prize ; but Mr. Bight, who, during this conversation, had safely bestowed the parchment in his bosom, and buttoned his shooting jacket over it, raising his piece, reminded them that he had a barrel at the service of each, and declared that he would shoot the first who attempted to follow him.

Now Benjamin had, in the course of his nautical career, earned a reputation for keeping his word, especially in such particulars, and, in the instance alluded to, had manifestly the advantage of the other two ; since Thornhill's pistol was useless, while Fenton's dirk, aimed with more energy than precision, had struck against a stone during the struggle on the ground, and broken off short at the hilt. Being, therefore, in no condition to dispute the point with Bight, they were fain to remain behind, and consult on the best means of providing for their mutual safety, which was, in no trifling degree, menaced by the loss of the deed.

Benjamin, agreeably to the intention he had expressed, " bore up " for the admiral's, whom he found discussing the respective merits of a bottle of " London Particular " and a charge of poaching, which had been brought before him in his capacity of a justice of the peace. The conscious culprit was trembling at one end of the table, while, behind him, stood a host of constables and witnesses, and a lurcher, which had been most unnaturally dragged forward as king's evidence against his master, the poacher.

The worthy magistrate was one of those who

rightly conceive that the temple of Justice should be open at all times and to all persons ; and, accordingly, he never postponed the hearing of a case from motives affecting his own convenience. Thus it happened, that his breakfast parlour and his dining room were as often the scene of his judicial investigations, as the apartment which was professedly devoted to them ; so that his guests were not unfrequently edified by the disposal of a charge of assault or vagrancy, by way of interlude, in an evening's entertainments.

But, although a functionary of the law, he was, it would appear, no friend to its professors, since he always preferred, what he was wont to designate, "splicing a quarrel," to sending it to the quarter sessions ; and if, in effecting so desirable an object, he, in some instances, compromised his magisterial dignity, he had the satisfaction of reflecting, that in dissuading two disputants from carrying their grievances into court, he, in all probability, prevented them from becoming enemies for life, and leaving their animosities as bequests to their children.

Bight, who never troubled his master upon trifling occasions, was immediately admitted to an audience ; when, with the preface of a sea-bow, he handed over the deed to the admiral, and briefly related the circumstances under which he obtained possession of it. The justice had no sooner read the superscription of the parchment, than, reverting to the matter previously under

consideration, he informed the prisoner that the charge had been proved, and convicted him in the penalty, which he immediately paid out of his own pocket ; intimating, however, to the transgressor, that he should certainly be put in the bilboes for the next offence.

Having thus cleared the court of culprit and constables, he perused the deed, not, however, without sundry parenthetical anathemas on the illegibility of the engrossing, and the circumlocution of the style ; when, after eliciting from Benjamin every particular of the recent scene in the abbey, he dismissed him with high commendations of the prudence and promptitude he had exhibited on the occasion.

The admiral was well acquainted with the history of the Somervilles, and, taking into consideration the nature of the document, in connection with his retainer's report of the dialogue between Thornhill and Fenton, arrived at the conclusion that there had been foul play in the matter. He, accordingly, lost no time in communicating to Edward Somerville, whose address he was fortunate enough to ascertain, the discovery he had made ; and, with the frank generosity of a seaman, offered the young gentleman pecuniary assistance in the prosecution of his claim, should legal proceedings become necessary.

Edward, however, who could command the wealth of the house at Amsterdam for that purpose, assured the admiral, that his gratitude for

the proffered aid was not diminished by the circumstance of his not requiring it ; and, having possessed himself of the "lost deed," he placed it in the hands of his legal adviser, directing him to take immediate measures for the recovery of the property on his father's behalf.

To the notice of ejectment, Richard Thornhill returned, through his solicitor, an answer of defiance ; but his opposition, it would seem, was exerted rather with a view of gaining time than with any expectation of succeeding in his object. The recovery of the deed, he well knew, however he might protract the proceedings, must ultimately prove fatal to his retention of the estate in dispute ; when the consequent claim for a long arrear of rents would sweep away the whole of the personal property left by his father, the amount of which was considerable. To avoid this dilemma, he employed the time, which the delays of the law allowed him, in reducing that property to a portable shape ; when he suddenly decamped, with his mother, to a foreign country, leaving his sister, who was, at that juncture, some miles from home, on a visit to a friend, without any intimation of his design.

On Gertrude's return to Beechgrove, she found the mansion deserted by all but a single domestic, who had voluntarily remained in charge of the furniture ; the greater portion of which had been left by the late occupants, not from motives of consideration for their successors, but because its removal would naturally have excited those sus-

pitions which it was their object to prevent. Miss Thornhill had been provided for by her father's will, but the funds, out of which the legacy was to be paid, were under the control of Richard Thornhill, as his father's executor, who hesitated not to add a breach of trust to the catalogue of his misdeeds, and thus leave his sister at the mercy of the world.

Little as she had experienced of the affection either of her mother or Richard, her feelings, on finding herself abandoned by her natural protectors, were bitter indeed ; and she gave vent to her anguish in a burst of tears. When the violence of her emotions subsided, she removed to the cottage of one of the tenants on the estate, hoping that the small sum of money, which her father's liberality had enabled her to lay by in his lifetime, would support her, until she could devise some plan for providing for her future maintenance.

But, deserted, as she deemed herself, by the world, she derived abundant consolation from the only unfailing fountain of it, her piety ; the unobtrusiveness of which was one of the tests of its sincerity. Her religion was neither a cloak nor a stalking-horse ; it being free alike from the cant of the hypocrite, and the parade of the *amateur*. True it is, that her thoughts would sometimes revert to one of whose attachment she had received assurances, the honesty of which she had never doubted ; but she knew that human nature was frail and fickle,—that the strongest

mind had been turned from its purpose by a sudden gale of prosperity, and that, therefore, it was “better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man.”

Edward Somerville, who, as in the former instance, had deemed it inexpedient to acquaint his father with the proceeding, finding himself master of the field, now wrote to him to say, that he had succeeded in obtaining for him a fitting residence, and requested that he would no longer delay his embarkation for England. With affectionate eagerness, he hastened to meet him at the port at which he was landed, and so arranged his subsequent journey that he should arrive at Beechgrove after nightfall.

The alteration in the furniture, as well as in the interior decorations of the mansion, prevented Mr. Somerville from recognising either the room into which he was ushered, or the chamber wherein he slept; but when he looked from the window in the morning, he was struck by the accordance of the scene before him with his recollections of his long-lost estate. When, however, he descended to the breakfast parlour, and gazed on the landscape it commanded, the ancient features of which even the subsequent growth of timber had not disguised, his doubts gave place to those conflicting sensations which his recognition of the spot was calculated to inspire; and, turning his eyes upon his son, he seemed to ask an explanation of the mystery. Edward advanced to him, and taking his hand, pressed it affec-

tionately, and said, " My dear father, Beechgrove is your own again ; may God, who has restored it to you, bless you with many years of health to enjoy it."

So overcome, however, was Mr. Somerville, by the feelings of delight and surprise which this announcement occasioned, that his son almost repented having practised upon him his well-intentioned, although somewhat injudicious *ruse* ; and several minutes elapsed before his parent was sufficiently calm to listen to Edward's recital of the manner in which the estate had been recovered. When he had satisfied him upon that head, he reverted to his adventures in England previous to the discovery of the lost deed ; dwelling particularly upon the circumstances of the remorse, attempt at restitution, and death of the elder Thornhill ; and not less at length, it may be imagined, on the beauty, virtues, and accomplishments of his daughter.

How he succeeded in consoling the fair Gertrude herself, or by what eloquence he finally prevailed upon her to return to Beechgrove, " the pleasant sharer of his heart of heart," my reader will better imagine than I can describe. Let it suffice to say, that the title by which he led her back, secured for her, at once, that place in the heart of his venerable parent, which her gentle virtues and affectionate attentions ever afterwards preserved.

It was not long after his marriage, that Edward was, one evening, informed, by a peasant on the

estate, that a person, who had been, for some time, the tenant of a wretched cottage in the neighbourhood, was lying there, apparently at the point of death, and that he had expressed a desire to see the younger Mr. Somerville. The latter immediately obeyed the summons, and found the person from whom it proceeded, stretched upon a miserable pallet, worn to a skeleton, and in a state of such extreme debility, as to be unable to articulate his wishes. Edward's first endeavour was, by the administration of proper nourishment, to restore his exhausted strength; in which, when he had, in some measure, succeeded, the unhappy man, whose features were wholly strange to him, stated, that feeling himself dying, he was desirous of confessing to one whom he had deeply injured, the crimes for which he was then suffering all the agonies of remorse.

It was Owen Fenton, who proceeded to disclose to Edward his abstraction of the deed, his participation in the scheme for carrying him off the coast, and his instrumentality in neutralising the last act of the elder Thornhill. The miserable man concluded, by imploring of Somerville that pardon from man which he utterly despaired of obtaining from God.

Under circumstances less calculated to excite his sympathy, Edward could not have withheld from the suffering sinner the consolation which he asked, and, accordingly, assured him of his and his father's entire forgiveness. Fenton's

mind appeared to be considerably relieved by this confession, and, contrary to his own anticipation, he began, under the humane and judicious care of Somerville, to improve in health; until, at last, he was enabled, with the assistance of his benefactor, to remove to a distant part of the country, where his name and his offences were unknown, and where, after many years of patient toil, he died, not, it is trusted, without an interest in Him, who is "willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him by faith."

Of the remaining, though certainly not a subordinate character in our narrative, Benjamin Bight, it is recorded, that he peremptorily refused to accept of any reward for the restoration of the deed, alleging that he had done nothing to deserve it. When, however, his master, the old admiral, died, Bight shifted his flag, as he termed it, to Beechgrove; where, under the nominal character of gamekeeper, but with license to employ his time as he pleased, he found quarters better suited to his increasing years, than the amphibious habitation which he had continued to occupy until his late master's death.

One of the many penalties we pay for longevity, is the loss of those who have been dear to us in our pilgrimage; but if Benjamin had to mourn the departure of some of his friends, their places were supplied by new, and, assuredly, not less sincere, ones in Edward Somerville's children, by whom the veteran's value, as a playmate, was early and gratefully felt. Carved and rigged by

his hand, their mimic fleets breasted the tiny billows of the fish-pond ; and, under his tuition, they were, in due time, initiated in the mysteries of navigating the little skiff which floated on its bosom. Who, like him, could beguile the long winter evenings with stories of shipwrecks upon desert shores, and engagements " yard-arm and yard-arm for six glasses," and with the wonders of outlandish regions, where the people *wear* *ear-rings* in their *noses* ; where parrots are as plentiful as sparrows, and pine apples may be had for the gathering ?

THE NOVICE.



THE NOVICE.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are various methods of introducing the hero of a story, one of which, if custom were a warrant for their propriety, I should feel myself bound to adopt. Some authors are wont to present him, as wizards evoke spirits, in a thunder-storm ; this writer brings him forward with a broken head, that with a broken sentence ; so that the reader, at the commencement of the narrative, is compelled to recur to the title-page, in order to assure himself that he has not plunged into the second or third volume, instead of the first.

It was towards the close of a day, at an advanced period of the autumn of 1705, that a horseman was seen riding at a smart pace in the vicinity of the British army, a portion of which was then encamped before Barcelona. He was a tall, erect figure, apparently about four-and-twenty ; and, if a judgment might be formed from his apparel,

which the gusts of the fitful wind occasionally rendered visible beneath his riding-cloak, he was an Englishman. The gloom of the approaching night was deepened by clouds which, ominous of a storm, had, for some time, been gathering, and which, at last, burst in a torrent of rain; not, as some of my readers will probably anticipate, with the romantic accompaniments of thunder and lightning, but as common-place downright a shower as ever filled the boots of a traveller.

The horseman drew up, and looked around him for temporary shelter, which he discovered in an umbrageous cork-tree, and immediately put himself and steed under its friendly protection. He had not been long in this situation when a short cough aroused his attention, and, turning his head, he perceived, what had previously escaped his notice, that he was not alone; a person on a grey horse, who, like himself, had sought shelter from the storm, having taken up a position on the other side of the tree. He was of lower stature and slighter make than he whom we first introduced, and whose name, in order to prevent confusion in the dialogue which ensued, it may be well, at once, to divulge;—it was Normanton.

“We are fortunate!” said he on the grey steed.

“Speaking for myself,” was Normanton’s reply, “who had hoped to reach Barcelona before night-fall, I can scarcely reckon the delay which this storm is likely to occasion, among the fortunate incidents of my journey.”

"Attached to the army, I presume?" inquired the first speaker.

"Not at present," was the laconic answer.

"About to join, then?" pursued the other.

"I cannot compliment you on the felicitousness of your guesses," responded Normanton.

"Travelling for your pleasure, doubtless?" continued the pertinacious interrogator.

"Had pleasure been my object," was the rejoinder, "I should have sought it elsewhere than in a country in which bullets are as plentiful as olives. But, without acknowledging the right of a stranger to the information, I care not who knows that I have business in Spain, and especially in this city of Barcelona, to which I set out immediately on hearing that, by a miracle beyond my comprehension, it had surrendered to the English."

"Your surprise, on the occasion," observed the other, "betokens little confidence in British prowess. It has been considered a splendid affair."

"It was a successful one," replied Normanton, "and that, with nine-tenths of mankind, will be deemed a sufficient answer to any objection which may be urged against the judgment which dictated the enterprise. A few, however, might maintain that the success of an adventure is no warrant for its prudence."

"Of which select body of sages you, doubtless, write yourself one?" said he of the grey charger; "but, cheap as you appear to hold the exploit, it

has been thought that there are few generals who would have achieved it."

"Nay," was the rejoinder, "I will even go further, and admit that the general in command here, is the only one in the British service who would have accomplished it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other, in surprise.

"Yes," continued Normanton; "because I know no one else who would have been rash enough to make the attempt."

"Well," was the response, "I see the shower is abating, and, therefore, wish you good speed; but," he added, with a laugh, "if you should fall in with any of the British patrols, I recommend you to speak a little more respectfully of their commander, or I think I can prophesy that you will scarcely reach Barcelona to-night."

Previously to the introduction of any more of our *dramatis personæ*, it may be well to afford our readers a brief sketch of that portion of history with which our narrative is interwoven. The opening scene of our drama is, as will have been perceived, on the coast of Spain; and the period is that of the war of succession between the houses of France and Austria. England, it is well known, espoused the part of the latter; while, with regard to Spain itself, the ancient animosity between Castile and Aragon caused those kingdoms to take opposite sides in the quarrel; and thus, while the Castilians favoured the pretensions of France, the Aragonese as zealously supported those of Austria.

In the provinces of Catalonia and Valencia the Archduke Charles, it was known, had many partizans ; to support whom it was deemed advisable, by the cabinet of Queen Anne, to despatch an army under the Earl of Peterborough. To this nobleman, who, anxious to distinguish himself, had long been solicitous of employment, the command was particularly acceptable ; coupled as it was with those discretionary powers which afforded ample scope to his chivalrous and daring spirit. Accordingly, towards the end of May, 1705, the earl sailed from St. Helen's with a body of infantry and artillery, amounting to about 5,000 men, of which nearly one third were Dutch, and the remainder English.

Arrived at Lisbon, wretchedly provided both in respect of money and stores, his first care was to remedy these defects, and his next to augment the efficiency of his forces ; which he accomplished by obtaining from Lord Galway two regiments of cavalry, and permission to exchange two battalions of recruits for the like number of veterans from the garrison of Gibraltar.

Foiled, in his design of attacking Valencia, by the obstinacy of the Archduke Charles, who, unfortunately for the freedom of the earl's movements, had accompanied him from Lisbon, he next sailed for Barcelona ; which, after encountering many obstacles interposed by the perverseness or luke-warmness of his colleagues, the archduke and the Prince of Hesse, he proceeded to attack ; and, although one of the largest and best fortified towns

in Spain, carried it under circumstances of difficulty that render the victory one of the most splendid of his achievements.

While the character of Charles, Earl of Peterborough, will be familiar to the majority of my readers, it may be interesting to others to know that he was one of those extraordinary men, who, like our own glorious Wellington, appear to have been born with a genius for war, which enables them to accomplish the most brilliant results with apparently the most inadequate means.

Eager of distinction, he sought it in every possible shape, both as a soldier and a diplomatist. In the field, he was brave and daring to a degree that, but for the admirable tact and precaution which characterized his operations, might have been termed rashness. As a diplomatist, he performed a conspicuous part at most of the courts of Europe, and displayed talents of no common order; but his overweening vanity, which appears to have been his besetting sin, caused him, not only to exceed his instructions, but to enact the ambassador long after his authority from his own government had been withdrawn. The same high appreciation of his own talents rendered him, as a general, overbearing and contemptuous towards those with whom he had to cooperate, and impatient of control or dictation from his superiors. It is, moreover, alleged that, in some instances, he allowed his personal piques and prejudices to interfere with the strict line of his duty as a general.

In private life he was generous to a degree of profusion which often involved him in difficulties. To liveliness of spirits, affability of deportment, and good breeding, he appears to have united a grace of manner, which saved even his eccentricities—and they were not a few—from an air of affectation, and secured to him the attachment of those whom he admitted to familiar intercourse.

Of his liberality, in contradistinction to the parsimony for which his great contemporary, Marlborough, was so celebrated, we have an illustration in a story which has been frequently quoted, though not always correctly as regards the actor, and we shall, therefore, venture to transfer it to our pages.

It happened that the Duke of Marlborough, like an equally noble and illustrious commander of the present day, was destined to find

“The fickle reek of popular applause”

converted into the yells and hisses of unmerited scorn. During this period of excitement, a mob surrounded the carriage of Peterborough, and, mistaking him for the Duke of Marlborough, began to threaten violence, when the earl thrust his head out of the window, and exclaimed; “Gentlemen, I will prove to you that you are mistaken, and that I am not the Duke of Marlborough: in the first place, I have but five guineas in my pocket; in the next, they are very much at your service;” and, as he spoke, he flung the coin among the populace, whose execrations were changed into plaudits.

In this anecdote, it will, doubtless, be alleged that Peterborough's pique against the duke was as conspicuous as his profuseness ; but the genuine liberality and disinterestedness of the earl were evinced, not only by his refusal to accept of any compensation for the loss of his baggage in Spain, and his readiness, on all occasions, to expend his last shilling in the public service, but by many acts of private benevolence, which a desire of securing the applause of the world could have had no share in suggesting.

Having thus, as it were, brought up the arrear of our story, we will return to our hero, whom, it will be remembered, we left under the cork-tree, the friendly shelter of which, anxious to resume his journey, he quitted immediately on the departure of his inquisitive companion, and rode forward. He had not proceeded far before he found himself within a short distance of one of the advanced posts of the British army, to avoid which he made a slight detour from his line of march. His manoeuvre, however, was perceived, and two troopers advanced towards him at a pace which, mounted as he was on a jaded steed, rendered escape impossible, and, accordingly, drawing up his horse, he awaited their arrival.

He was first asked for the watch-word, and next for his passport ; and being unable to give the one or produce the other, he was civilly informed that he must accompany them back to their post. Against this he vehemently remonstrated, alleging the urgency of his affairs, which

required his presence in Barcelona that evening. The troopers were old soldiers, and men of the world, who knew the utter inefficiency of verbal logic in convincing a man against his preconceived notions, and merely replied by presenting their carbines. Arguments from such *mouts* are particularly conclusive, and Normanton, unwilling to provoke a discussion which might leave him without any brains to argue withal, quietly, if not patiently, submitted.

The two dragoons by whom our hero had been captured were under the command of a corporal, Dennis Mulrooney, an Irishman, as his name imports; who, unlike the generality of his compatriots, was of a truly peaceable disposition, seeing that he took up arms as a last resource, and only came to the king for a dinner, when he found he could get none from his subjects. In fact, his liberality had somewhat exceeded his means, and he was, at length, reduced to one alternative, namely, the highway or the army. To the credit of his honesty, as well as his taste, be it recorded, he preferred the chance of being shot to that of being hanged.

Dennis was an odd compound of simplicity and shrewdness; and, although his blundering precipitancy was constantly plunging him into troubled waters, his buoyant wit usually floated him out of them. For the rest, he was distinguished by open-heartedness towards his comrades, and obedience to his officers; qualities which gained him favour from all quarters, and, added to his courage

and honesty, procured for him promotion to the rank of corporal.

Mulrooney had his share in the national stock of modest assurance, and piqued himself upon his proficiency in dancing a jig, roaring a song, and telling a story: but his vanity did not extend to his moral qualifications, his diffidence with regard to which, if it produced no better effect, taught him charity towards the faults of others; so that when he saw a fellow-creature on the ground, Dennis was not the "boy" to put his foot on him.

Accordingly, when Normanton was introduced to the station, a ruined cottage, in which the corporal kept guard, the latter received him with a courtesy that was natural to him; and, after conferring with his comrades for a few minutes, sent a report to his officer, stating the dry fact of the traveller having been taken without a passport, and requesting orders as to his disposal. Many in Dennis's situation,

"Vain of a little brief authority,"

would have taken upon themselves the task of a preliminary examination of the prisoner; but, as the corporal charitably remarked, "there's no use in asking a poor fellow questions overnight which, may be, he would not answer in the same way in the morning; and it's as reasonable to hang a man for having a short neck, as for being troubled with a short memory."

When the soldier who had been despatched with the report had returned and communicated to

Dennis the instructions of his superior, the corporal, addressing himself to Normanton, said, "It's sorry I am entirely to do the hard thing by ye, but it's the gineral's orders, and there's no help for it. You are my prisoner until the morning, when, may be, ye'll be tried by a court martial, and if ye don't give a good account of yourself, it's shoot ye for a spy they will."

Normanton, much shocked by this sudden *exposé* of his danger, the full extent of which he had not previously comprehended, betrayed symptoms of something more than surprise on the occasion; when Dennis, with an attempt at consoling the prisoner, which, it must be confessed, had more of philosophy than comfort in it, continued, "Don't be making yourself unasy, *a bouchal*, because, may be, ye'll be kilt to-morrow morning. Hasn't myself the chance of that same every day in the week? Besides, if it's guilty ye are, ye'll be getting your due, and it is not every man can get that, I can tell ye."

"But," remonstrated the prisoner, "I am utterly innocent of the offence on suspicion of which I am thus unwarrantably detained."

"So much the better," exclaimed Mulrooney, "for then ye'll die with a clane conscience any how."

The corporal, who could not perceive the necessity for a man to be sorrowful merely on the prospect of his being hanged or shot on the morrow, continued his endeavours to divert the mind of his guest; but, finding them ineffectual,

he next turned his attention to the refreshment of his body, and placed a flask of wine, a loaf, and a bunch of raisins on the table, to which he assured him he was "as welcome as life."

The prisoner, in acknowledgment of the other's hospitality, partook, although sparingly, of the proffered banquet, and then flung himself upon a pallet, which had been resigned to him by the corporal; who, by way of additional inducement to his prisoner to take repose, assured him, that if, contrary to his expectations, an order should arrive for his being shot, out of hand, without judge or jury, he might depend upon being awakened in time for the ceremony.

Whether it was that this consolatory assurance had the effect of setting the captive's mind at rest, or that the fatigues of the day prevailed over the anxieties excited by the predicament in which he was placed, we cannot pretend to determine; but, certain it is, that, after turning himself once or twice upon his unwonted couch, Normanton fell into a profound sleep, leaving the corporal to finish the banquet which himself had spread; a task, by the way, which he performed with a celerity acquired only upon service, when the expediency of securing a meal while it is to be had, is too frequently inculcated to be disregarded.

CHAPTER II.

"O THEN, it's myself has some hopes of ye yet," was the exclamation of Mulrooney, when, by dint of shaking and shouting, he had succeeded in awaking his prisoner. "It's a light conscience ye have," he continued, "to be lying fast asleep for six hours at a stretch, and Tim Nowlan, to the fore here, snoring at the top of his voice, within a yard of ye: bad luck to him for that same! for the dickens a word can I hear myself spake for the noise he makes. Get up wid ye, Tim, I bid ye!" he added, applying his booted toe to the said Nowlan's ribs with an energy which, on any other person, would have had the effect not only of putting an end to his slumbers, but of securing him against a relapse for the next eight and forty hours.

In the instance of Tim, however, it merely produced a continuation of the tune, with variations; when Mulrooney, out of all patience, seized a pair of tongs, which were lying "convenient," and made so close an application of the argument to Nowlan's nostrils, that his song and his slumber terminated at once; thus demonstrating what Dennis had frequently asserted, that Tim could never sleep a wink without snoring.

"O Dennis!" exclaimed Nowlan, unconscious of the means to which the corporal had resorted

in his efforts to arouse him, “ it’s an ugly dhrame I’ve had.”

“ What was it ? ” inquired his comrade.

“ I dhramed my nose was in purgatory,” was the answer

“ O then, it’s myself that thought as much,” returned Dennis, “ by the noise it made. By the same token, it’s as black as a coal it is.”

“ Faith, and it’s no dhrame at all at all ! ” roared Nowlan, in an agony of terror, as getting a glance of his nasal promontory, which its length enabled him to do without the aid of a looking-glass, he perceived the discoloration produced by the sooty embrace of the tongs. “ By my sowkins, then, it’s burned to a cinder it is ! ” he added.

“ And smarts like any thing, I’ll engage,” said Mulrooney, with a knowing wink, to Normanton.

“ Murder, alive ! and so it does,” exclaimed the sufferer, whose nose, having been benumbed by the violence of the pinch, was resuming its sensibilities, “ it’s been in purgatory, sure enough.”

“ It’s a pity ye did not lave it there,” rejoined the corporal, “ for it’s a bad neighbour it is to your ears, I’m thinking. But Tim, *avich*, never mind your nose ; ye can spake to Father Phelim about it, by-and-bye. In the mane time, see if ye can’t coax Moll Flanagan out of a dhrop and a bit for the prisoner by the fire here, for the gineral has sent for him, and ye would not have him go to trial with an empty stomach.”

Now Tim, to use an appropriate and significant expression (of his own country, I believe),

was a “devil-may-care” sort of personage ; and, like the generality of those of his stamp, although reckless of admonition conveyed through the ordinary channels, was terrified beyond conception when it visited him, as he conceived, in a supernatural shape. Accordingly, he deputed to a fellow-soldier the task of catering for the prisoner’s breakfast, and repaired to Father Phelim, the priest, to whom he stated his case, with all the exaggerations suggested by his alarmed conscience.

The priest, in whatever degree he might have been wanting in learning, was, in no wise, deficient in either sense or discrimination ; and was, moreover, enabled, from the proof impression of the tongs on Nowlan’s proboscis, to give a tolerably accurate guess at the cause of his alarm ; whereas, Tim, who could reconnoitre his nose only through the medium of a squint, had taken an oblique, and consequently an imperfect, view of the subject.

Father Phelim, gladly availing himself of an opportunity of attempting Tim’s reformation, through the instrumentality of his superstitious fears, read him a severe lecture upon the multitude and enormity of his offences, especially “in regard of the dhrink ;” and concluded by bidding him go and wash his injured feature in a neighbouring spring ; which, from its miraculous influence in removing the discoloration of Nowlan’s nose, acquired, among all good catholics, the appellation of the “holy well,” and, for aught

I know to the contrary, retains its name to the present day.

Normanton, in the mean time, having partaken of the breakfast of the hospitable corporal, was conducted into the presence of a council of the principal officers of the British army, who, having assembled on matters of higher importance, had determined on examining the prisoner before they broke up. His eye was naturally directed towards the officer who seemed to take the lead in the examination, and who was a man apparently about seven and forty, of a slight make, and a prepossessing expression of countenance. It was the Earl of Peterborough.

Normanton was questioned by almost every individual of the council; particularly with reference to the circumstance of his being in a disturbed country without any credentials or passport, which, as a British subject, and one, to all appearance, of respectable station, he might easily have obtained from his government.

His replies were to the effect, that business, the purport of which he pertinaciously refused to divulge, required his presence in Spain, and particularly in the city of Barcelona; that, previously to his embarkation from England, he had provided himself with the requisite credentials as to his personal respectability, and the legitimate character of his mission; but that he had been attacked by banditti, within a few miles of Barcelona, by whom he had been plundered of every article of baggage, and deprived of his papers; and

that it was almost by a miracle that he had escaped with his life.

In the commencement of this examination, Normanton identified the voice of the president of the council, the Earl of Peterborough, as that of the person by whom he had been catechised when availing himself of the shelter of the cork-tree ; and in whom, of course, after the unrestrained criticism in which he had indulged on the earl's military character, he could scarcely expect to find a very zealous advocate upon the occasion in question. To Normanton's surprise, however, he found, by the remarks which that nobleman addressed to his colleagues, that he was disposed to take the most merciful view of the prisoner's case ; and, upon being opposed by some of the council in his opinion on the subject, he expressed himself in a manner which, if it did not imply contempt, argued very little deference for their judgment.

The fact, however, of the prisoner's being without any credentials, while the story, by which he attempted to account for their absence, was one that would have occurred to the most ordinary invention, operated materially to his prejudice in the minds of his military judges ; and, coupled with his pertinacious refusal to explain the purport of his errand to Barcelona, finally prevailed against him. Excepting only the Earl of Peterborough, who, not caring, perhaps, to oppose a fruitless vote to an overwhelming majority, maintained a scornful silence, the assembly were

unanimous in the opinion, that the prisoner was a spy; and that as such, and for the sake of example, which at that period was deemed highly requisite, he should be punished by the forfeiture of his life.

Normanton was then removed from the council-room, with the assurance that the sentence would be carried into execution at sunset. The prisoner, who felt that a tide of circumstances had set against him, with which it was vain to contend, heard his doom with fortitude, if not with resignation; and, on being left alone in his place of confinement, applied himself to such preparation for the awful change as the brief space allotted to him in this world allowed.

That the aged pilgrim, weary and way-worn, should be ready, and even rejoice, to lay down the existence which time and infirmity have made a burthen, is scarcely matter of astonishment; yet we sometimes see him reluctant to resign the cup of life, though all that it contains for him be bitterness: but, in the season of youth and health, when hope is high and the world is new to us, it is hard to find the gates of the grave suddenly interposed between us and the lovely scenes which imagination had fondly pictured. If, therefore, as the sun, with whose course his own was to terminate, approached the horizon, the prisoner's pulse beat quick, and his cheek became alternately flushed and pallid, it should excite neither astonishment nor an imputation on his courage.

At last the evening gun was heard, and Normanton felt that his hour was at hand. The door of his prison opened, and the Earl of Peterborough stood before him. "If your voice, in the council-room, did not cheat my ears," said the general, "you are the critic, in whose opinion, I, as a commander, was honoured with so exalted a place?"

Normanton, with a melancholy smile, bowed assent.

"Well, then," continued the earl, "I am disposed to think favourably of your case; in the first place, because my colleagues were unanimous in their sentence upon you, experience having taught me that their unanimity usually conducts them to a wrong conclusion; and, in the second place, I find it difficult to believe that a man who, like yourself, carries his opinions on his sleeve, can be a spy or a traitor. Nevertheless, your doom has been pronounced, and I dare not reverse it; but I can procrastinate its execution, and thus give time for further investigation."

Normanton thanked the earl for his good opinion, as well as his generous interference in behalf of a stranger; but added, that he had little hope of the result, since he could not call on any one to corroborate the account he had given of himself, while the recovery of his written credentials was out of the question.

"I am not so certain of that," replied the earl; "since, if I mistake not, the worthy personage

who eased you of them is an ancient friend of mine, with whom, if I could communicate, I should have little doubt of recovering the papers ; always supposing that he has not already lit his pipe with them. However, I have gained you a respite for twenty-four hours, in which space much may be done ; yet, how to get speech of my old acquaintance, I know not. If I send an embassy to him in the shape of a troop of horse, he will espy them at a distance ; and, being aware of the honour designed for him, will bury himself like a fox, and defy the efforts of the whole army to unearth him. Again, I dare not despatch a pacific message to him by any one who has aught to lose, either in coin or clothing, for they would not hesitate to cut a man's throat for the value of the lace on his jacket."

The earl, after a few moments' reflection, continued, "Mulrooney is the man ! he has wit, courage, and assurance, which will carry him through anything ; and if the bandits should strip him as bare as when he came into the world, he will be as well clothed, within a rag or two, as when he entered the army. Farewell, then," he added in a louder tone, as he was quitting the apartment, " and although I cannot promise you deliverance from your present dilemma, no exertion on my part shall be wanting to effect it."

The name of the "captain of free lances," who had eased Normanton of his purse and papers, was Roque ; a namesake, by the way, of the celebrated Roque Guinart, who, according to

that veritable historian, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, some hundred years before, practised his vocation in that part of Catalonia, although Guinart was by far the more gentlemanly cut-throat of the two.

Roque the Second had contrived to make friends with both the belligerent powers, by giving to each information of the other's movements, which his wandering mode of life enabled him to pick up; and thus arose the acquaintance, to which Peterborough had alluded, between the robber and himself.

Another reason for the earl's selection of Mulrooney for the enterprise doubtless existed in the fact of the latter having a countryman in Roque's band, which obviated the necessity of attaching an interpreter to the embassy; a knowledge of the Spanish language not being among the corporal's accomplishments.

Unwilling to offer any temptation to the cupidity of the robbers, among whom he knew jackets were at a premium, Dennis arrayed himself in his second best; and, thus secure, at any rate, against losing one *suit*, however unsuccessful he might prove in obtaining another, and, invested by the general with plenary powers to treat, should stratagem be found impracticable or inexpedient, he set out on his journey to the fast-hold of the banditti.

Roque had established his head quarters in a ruined tower that, situated upon an eminence, commanded an extensive view of the surrounding

country in every direction but one, by which Dennis determined to approach it, although, in order to do so, he was compelled to make a considerable deviation from the direct path. He was influenced to this manœuvre by a knowledge of Captain Roque's passion for horse-flesh, and a consequent desire to keep his steed out of sight. Accordingly, before his approach could be descried by the robbers, he secured the animal in a thicket, and proceeded on foot.

The corporal advanced to the tower with a lounging step and confident manner, as if he was either ignorant of its being inhabited, or unacquainted with the character of its tenants. Before, however, he reached the portal, he was challenged, from a tower which overhung it, in a voice which, though the speaker was invisible, he had no difficulty in identifying, and accordingly replied, "Barney, ye thief of the world, is that yourself?"

"Faith, and it is, then," was the rejoinder, "and it's glad I am to see ye, Dennis, any how."

"Then, may be, ye'd be giving me the same pleasure, and step down out of your stone cage there," said Mulrooney, who spoke without fear of being understood by any other of the robbers who might happen to be within hearing. "Can I get speech of your captain?" he added, when the other had descended.

"It's a thrifle too late ye are for that same, Dennis," was the answer; "the captain went out on business, about an hour ago, with the

whole of the band, except myself; and it's uncertain it is when he 'll come back."

" So much the better!" exclaimed Mulrooney, who had, from the first, felt a reluctance to negotiate with Roque, being aware that " the murdering villain," as Dennis termed him, would set a price upon the papers, when apprized of their importance ; and the circulating medium was, at that particular juncture, by no means in abundance at head quarters.

The corporal then frankly explained to Barney the purport of his mission, and the importance of the stake involved in its success, and concluded by imploring his assistance in the recovery of the papers. The energetic appeal, to the better feelings of his misguided countryman, with which Dennis enforced his request, was not without its influence. Barney, however, replied to the effect that, with every disposition to afford his assistance, he apprehended that the case was a hopeless one ; inasmuch, as the captain usually destroyed all papers, belonging to his victims, which were not convertible into cash. He, nevertheless, added, that there was an apartment in the ruin which was used as a sort of lumber-room for the refuse of their pillage ; and that as the traveller, in whose fate the corporal was interested, had been recently plundered, it was just possible that the papers in question might be found amongst the rubbish.

To this apartment Barney conducted his visitor, who was overjoyed on perceiving the floor strewed

with a variety of papers, which he forthwith proceeded to examine. His companion, after regarding him for a few minutes attentively, remarked, "It's lately come to ye, Dennis, to know one bit of paper from another. I remember the time well enough when ye couldn't read a word in a printed book, for the life of ye, let alone writing."

"That's true for ye," replied Mulrooney, "but, may be, ye don't know that the letter I am searching for has a sale as big as a pancake on it, with her majesty's arms, and long life to her!"

"O then!" exclaimed the other, "there's no use in looking there for it; by the same token, I saw the captain himself fling it into the lap of Mistress Ursula, for a plaything."

"And who's Mistress Ursula?" inquired Dennis.

"A limb of the ould one, I'm thinking," was the reply; "but the captain calls her his wife."

"And where is she?" continued the corporal.

"In the little room, over there," answered Barney, pointing to the end of a narrow passage, along which he stole with cautious steps; and, after listening for a few seconds, beckoned Dennis to follow; when, through a crevice, the latter perceived an Amazonian figure of a woman extended upon a couch, and apparently asleep. By her side was a carbine, and in her girdle were a dagger and a brace of small pistols. At her head stood a low table, upon which was an envelope with a large seal, while the paper it had contained was lying on the floor.

The first impulse of the corporal was to rush forward, regardless of consequences, and seize the prize; but Barney withheld him by a strong grasp, and whispered, "Is it mad ye are? If ye wake her, it's kilt and murdered we are, entirely!"

"Is it the woman ye fear?" whispered Dennis, in derision of the other's caution.

"Ah! then," replied the other, "ye don't know her. It's herself has shed more blood than any two men in the band. Besides, one touch of the bell-rope ye see there, within an inch of her fingers, would bring some of the gang upon us in no time."

The corporal, however, determined not to abandon the enterprize, with the object of his mission almost within his grasp, still pressed forward; and, despite the efforts of the other to restrain him, would have opened the door, which was not fastened. Barney, at last perceiving that Mulrooney was resolute, consented, as a choice of two evils, to undertake the perilous task himself. He accordingly advanced stealthily into the apartment, and approached the table, when the sleeper made a slight movement with her hand, and the intruder instantly retreated.

In a few seconds she appeared to have relapsed into a sound slumber, and Barney again made the attempt, and succeeded in reaching the couch without disturbing her. He stooped and picked up the paper, but, in recovering himself, unfortunately struck his head against the table, with a

violence which awakened the Amazon, who started on her feet. She instinctively, as it were, grasped the bell-rope with one hand, and drawing a pistol with the other, presented it at head of the intruder :—the whole was the work of an instant.

The scene was one of no ordinary interest, inasmuch as the lives of three persons were at the mercy of the bandit's wife ; who, by one peal of the alarm, which was used to summon the robbers when their fortress was threatened, could bring destruction upon Barney and his friend, while the failure of the enterprise would seal the doom of Normanton. Nor was the crisis by any means free from immediate danger, as Ursula was more than a match for the two Irishmen ; she being well provided with arms, and possessing both the skill and the courage to use them ; while Barney had left his musket in the tower above the gateway, and Dennis had secreted his pistols in the thicket, well knowing that they would excite the cupidity, if not the suspicions, of the robbers, without availing him aught against the number he expected to encounter. Be it, however, far from me to insinuate that, had they been even furnished with arms, they would not have preferred death itself to staining their manhood by the use of them against a woman, in whatever degree their antagonist might have forfeited the privileges of her sex.

Barney, whose presence of mind did not fail him at this perilous juncture, ducked his head to avoid the presented pistol, and, preserving his

stooping position, with his hand thrust in his bosom, apparently to add grace and emphasis to his apology, but, in reality, to conceal the paper, he exclaimed, "O then, murder! it 's myself that 's dazzled with your beautiful eyes! I ax ten thousand pardons of ye, but I hard the captain's signal, and I thought, may be, ye 'd like to know he was coming, in regard of his dinner."

Ursula, although somewhat mollified by the opening of Barney's speech, appeared, at first, very far from yielding implicit credence to his excuse; but he, taking advantage of her doubts upon the subject, poured in a broadside of flattery; and as, with the dear sex, compliments are said to go further than reasons, he succeeded in appeasing her wrath. True it is, she understood very few words of English; but flattery has a universal language, and there is a *breadth* about Irish flattery, which renders it particularly translateable.

With sundry scrapes and gesticulations, Barney retrograded to the door, and finally bowed himself out of the apartment; when, rejoining his countryman, he thrust the paper into his hand, and bade him depart while he could make good his retreat. Dennis, however, who had long lamented his countryman's connexion with the banditti, was unwilling to lose an opportunity which might never recur, of endeavouring to win him back from his evil courses. Barney, on the other hand, anxious, as well on his own account as his friend's, that the latter should

depart, remonstrated with him on the madness of delay, adding, "It's trifling with your life ye are."

"That's true for ye, Barney," was the reply, "but it's yourself that's trifling with your salvation."

"O then, Dennis, *avich!*" exclaimed Barney, "if that's a sermon ye'd be after praching, may be ye'd put it off a bit; for if it's make it a minute longer ye do, ye'll have hearers ye won't like."

"Ah! Barney," replied the other, "it's sorry I am to see your father's son keeping company with thieves and cut-throats. It's the bad thing ye're doing, and ye'll get a halter for your pains."

"And that's the *line* of promotion, any how," responded Barney, who, even under such circumstances of peril to himself and his friend, could not forbear his joke.

"O then, Barney, I'm ashamed of ye entirely, ye hardened villain!" pursued the monitor; "remember, where the tree falls it will lie; and if ye get hanged or shot in your sin, ye'll rise up, in the day of judgment, with its curse upon your sowl."

"Arrah, now," inquired Barney, a little touched by the unwonted solemnity of his countryman, "what in the world would ye have me do?"

"Lave the murdering thief of a captain you're serving," replied Mulrooney, "and fight for your queen and country, as I do; and then ye'll have

as good a chance of a halberd as ye now have of a halter."

" And the same, and may be a better, chance of being kilt, ye might have said," observed the other.

" Barney!" exclaimed Dennis, bitterly, " it 's a bad sign it is, when ye can't see the difference between dying a dog's death upon the gallows, and falling like a man on the field of glory."

The other, who was heartily tired of his marauding life, and would, long since, have returned to honest courses, had the path been open to him, admitted the justice of his friend's remarks, but urged the probability of his attempt at escape being frustrated by one of the numerous parties of the robbers which were prowling about in all directions ; adding, that a cruel death would be the infallible consequence of his capture.

Mulrooney was about to reply to his countryman's objections, when, to their mutual consternation, the alarm was violently sounded, and broke like a knell upon their ears.

" Thunder and ages ! what will I do now, at all at all ?" was Barney's exclamation.

" Run for the bare life," was the reply of his companion, who set him an example by starting off, in the direction of the thicket in which he had left his horse, closely followed by Barney.

CHAPTER III.

BARNEY's flattery, it appeared, acted merely as a temporary opiate on the suspicions of Ursula, which were awakened by the circumstance of her missing the paper he had abstracted. She accordingly determined to watch his movements, when, perceiving him in conversation with a stranger, whom, by his attire, she knew to belong to the British army, she immediately scented treason, and therefore gave the alarm, in the hope of bringing a portion, if not the whole, of the band to her assistance.

Nor was her summons disregarded, for the two Irishmen had scarcely gained the level ground, before a mounted party of six of the banditti were seen sweeping round the base of the eminence on which their strong hold was situated. The sight of their comrade flying across the plain in company with a soldier, afforded a solution of the cause of the alarm, and drew them instantly into the chase.

Four legs against a pair are fearful odds, and the equestrians, of course, gained ground upon the pedestrians at every step, till, at length, the tramp of the pursuers' horses reached the ears of the fugitives, and grew each moment more alarmingly distinct.

"Murder, alive!" exclaimed Barney, out of breath, not more from fatigue than the apprehension of the terrible death with which he was threatened, "it's lost we are entirely! I can't run five minutes longer."

"Keep it up for three," replied Dennis, "until we gain the thicket forent us, and it's try their mettle we will yet."

Thus encouraged, the other, who was dropping behind, redoubled his efforts, while the distance to the desired goal was so short as to afford a hope of their gaining it before their pursuers; when one of the latter, better mounted than the rest, pushed forward and reached the thicket almost at the same instant that the fugitives plunged into it. Before, therefore, Dennis could disengage his horse, the robber was by his side. Mulrooney, however, who had repossessed himself of his pistols, turned suddenly upon his assailant and fired. The bandit uttered an execration, reeled in his saddle, and finally, loosing his hold of the reins, fell to the ground.

To disencumber the fallen foe of his arms, and to mount his horse, were tasks performed by Barney with a dexterity of appropriation which proved him to have been an apt scholar in the practical part of his late profession, and excited the admiration of Dennis, who felicitated himself on the prospect of rendering such splendid talents available to her majesty's service.

The two friends were, however, scarcely mounted, before the main body of their pursuers began to

make their way through the bushes. The first impulse of Dennis was to continue the retreat; but a moment's reflection on the superior fleetness of the robbers' horses to that of his own heavy charger, convinced him of the impolicy of such a measure. Accordingly, adopting a stratagem worthy of the genius of his great commander, he bade Barney stand his ground, and drew up by his side. Thus, the first objects which met the view of the banditti, when they had made their way into the thicket, was the bleeding body of their fallen comrade, and two armed horsemen, who immediately delivered their fire, and, in one instance, with fatal effect.

The robbers, who, in the smoke and the confusion of the moment, did not identify the trooper and his companion with the pedestrian fugitives, took it for granted that they had been decoyed into an ambush; and, being uncertain of the number of their opponents, fairly wheeled about, and, emerging upon the plain, galloped back to the tower.

Precious as was every moment to men in their circumstances, the corporal and his *protégé* did not deem it safe to quit the thicket, until they had watched the robbers into their castle; when the two Hibernians put their horses to their speed, and, happily, reached the head quarters of the British army without further molestation.

Mulrooney, immediately on his arrival, reported to his general the successful issue of his mission, dwelling especially upon the co-operation

of his countryman, for whom he solicited the earl's countenance, and pledged himself for the sincerity of Barney's repentance, as well as for his future good behaviour.

"Dennis," replied the earl, "the alacrity with which you undertook this hazardous commission, and the gallantry and skill with which you have executed it, are creditable alike to your humanity and your soldiership; and I promise you not only protection for your friend, but promotion for yourself, on the occurrence of the first vacancy. In the mean time, as your recruit comes ready mounted, you had better enrol him in your own troop; in which, with the benefit of your example and advice, I doubt not, he will fully redeem the pledge you have given in his behalf."

"O then, it's too good your honour is entirely!" exclaimed the grateful corporal, as he quitted the presence of his general, who immediately gave orders that Normanton should be brought before him. Our hero received the summons like one who had every reason for believing that it was but the prelude to his death; and was accordingly ushered into the presence of Peterborough, whom he found alone in his quarters.

When the earl had ordered the prisoner's guards out of his presence, he said, with a smile which reflected the benevolence of his heart, "Mr. Normanton, or I should rather say Captain Normanton, for I find by this paper that you have served, I am happy to announce to you that you are

free. For myself, I had never any doubt of your entire innocence of the charge on which you were arrested ; and I now restore to you a document which will satisfy even the scruples of my colleagues. I exceedingly regret the personal restraint to which you have been subjected, the more especially as I find your affairs in Barcelona require despatch, and may have suffered by your detention. However, as a soldier, you will readily perceive the salutariness of regulations which, although unjustly enforced in your particular case, are essential to the safety of an army."

" It is a little too much," answered Normanton, smiling, " to expect me to subscribe to a doctrine to which I had well nigh been sacrificed. Nevertheless, I hold myself indebted to your lordship's generosity for my life, and hope to prove myself, as I pray you to believe me, not ungrateful for the boon."

" Nay," rejoined the earl, " under my conviction of your innocence, I could not act otherwise than I have done. I have rendered you no more than justice, and, therefore, make no claim on your gratitude. If, however, there be any obligation in the case, you will cancel it, and leave me much your debtor, by accepting a command in the British army."

" Your lordship," responded Normanton, " has an ingenious method of increasing an obligation while you would appear to lighten it ; and I beseech you to attribute my hesitation in embracing

your offer to the uncertainty in which my mission to Barcelona is involved, rather than to an indifference to the honour of serving under so distinguished a commander."

"I rejoice to find," was Peterborough's reply to the compliment, "that my generalship has risen in your estimation, since our interview under the cork-tree."

"Your recollection of which may reasonably suggest a doubt of my sincerity upon the present occasion," was Normanton's rejoinder; "but I have since found that your lordship commands the heart, as well as the hand, of every soldier in the British army, and have therefore ceased to wonder at the magnitude of its attempts, and the splendid success by which they have been crowned."

"Well," rejoined Peterborough, "your business in Barcelona, be its nature what it may, must speedily be settled or abandoned, for our tenure of the city is none of the most certain, and I suspect that you will find the name of Englishman a poor passport to the favour of our successors. I do not despair, therefore, of hailing you a brother in arms; in which case," added the earl, laughing, "I shall hope for the same candour of criticism in the camp which I experienced under the cork-tree. In the mean time, you must oblige me in another particular; in which, as compliance is within your power, I will admit of no refusal; and that is, by allowing me to be your banker, until you can obtain remittances

from England: nay, no scruples or excuses; I know my friend Roque too well to suppose for a moment that, having once had his fingers in your pocket, he withdrew them without emptying it of the last farthing."

Normanton, thus urged, availed him of the proffered aid, to an amount, however, considerably under that which the other would have pressed upon his acceptance, and took his leave, with many acknowledgments of this additional proof of the earl's generosity.

Leaving my hero to prosecute the object of his visit to Barcelona, I must request my readers to accompany me back a few years, in order that they may be possessed of some particulars of his earlier history, which, although not very interesting, are essential to my narrative. I have elsewhere attempted to exemplify the loss and inconvenience which accrue to a man from his being too late; and I might have illustrated my subject by quoting the case of Henry Normanton, who, happening to come into the world a few years after his brother, was punished by exclusion from the family estate, and left to pursue his fortune by one of the paths, more various, it must be confessed, than tempting, which are open to younger sons. He was, in his own opinion, too good for the law, and not good enough for the church; while, from the circumstance of his having been compelled, by the professional partiality of the family nurse for his elder brother, to swallow all the doses intended for the latter, he

had contracted an insuperable dislike to physic. In his election of the profession of arms, he was supposed to have been influenced, in no trifling degree, by a consideration of the simplicity of its duties, which are all comprised in obedience of orders ; genius, a quality to which he made no pretensions, being required, and, as far as I could ever discover, possessed by commanders-in-chief only, among whom he was not so presumptuous as to hope to be numbered.

I regret that a chasm in the documents, from which this memoir is compiled, leaves me in ignorance of the particulars, and even the precise theatre, of his early campaigns ; I merely gather, generally, that he served with reputation, and had attained the rank of captain, when the death of his elder brother gave him the right to the family estate. As, however, he could not, consistently with his notions of honour, immediately release himself from his military engagements, a considerable period elapsed before he returned to England to claim the property, the management of which, in the interim, had devolved upon his uncle.

Now Gervase Normanton, like many who have been rather victims on the altar of justice than worshippers in her temple, would have been one of the most honest men in the world, if temptation had not come in his way. To speak seriously, it is probable that when he assumed the management of the estate, the idea of retaining it never entered his mind ; and that if Henry, when it lapsed, had been on the spot to claim it, his uncle

would not have disputed his right. But the sweets of possession were too powerful for Ger-vase's honour, of which he had once been vain and confident ; and he fell, adding to the number of warning instances of human virtue, unsupported by religious principle, yielding to temptation as the reed before the blast !

The alleged ground of resistance to Henry's claim was the latter's illegitimacy ; and it happened that his mother's marriage was a fact which, like many in law as well as philosophy, was more easily challenged than proved, as no record of it could be found ; while the clergyman, by whom the ceremony was performed, had quitted England, and had not been heard of for many years.

Henry Normanton, independently of his entertaining a very excusable affection for so handsome an estate, was not a man to submit quietly to a violation of his rights, even in a matter of much less importance ; and therefore, after remonstrating strongly, but ineffectually, with his uncle on the flagrant injustice of his proceeding, applied himself vigorously to obtain redress.

His first care was to trace out the clergyman, whom, after repeated and persevering inquiry, he ascertained to have taken up his residence in Spain. Abel Neale, the divine in question, was a man whose zeal for the religion he professed was unembittered by a particle of bigotry. Although naturally of a mild disposition, he was fearless in the performance of what he conceived

to be his duty ; his Bible had enjoined him to " preach the word," and he never allowed considerations for his personal safety to interfere with his obedience. Whether the extension of his Master's kingdom in Spain was the immediate object of his voyage to that country, I am not prepared to state ; but, when arrived there, he laboured in his vocation with an energy which soon attracted the notice, and brought down on him the vengeance, of the Catholic clergy.

Persecution assailed him in every form, and with such bitterness, that he was at last hunted from place to place, like a beast of prey, and was compelled to take refuge in the most obscure parts of the towns in which he sojourned ; yet, never losing sight of his duty, he continued to do his Master's work in secret, when to have done it openly would infallibly have brought both his life and his labours to a premature close.

Thus it happened, that Henry Normanton experienced no ordinary difficulty in tracing the steps of the divine ; and, being aware of the circumstances of danger in which the worthy man was placed,—that, in fact, a discovery of his abode in Barcelona would set the blood-hounds of the Inquisition upon him,—our hero preferred, as we have seen, to meet death himself, rather than, by disclosing the nature and object of his pursuit, to compromise the safety of another. With Peterborough, indeed, the secret would have been safe ; and a knowledge of that nobleman's frank and generous disposition would have

induced Normanton to explain his situation, without reserve, at his first private interview with the earl ; the latter, however, he found, instead of being the arbiter of his fate, either could not act alone in the matter, or, possessing the power to do so, had reasons of policy for declining to exercise it in the teeth of his colleagues ; to whom he must necessarily have explained the prisoner's motives for visiting Barcelona, before he could obtain their consent to his liberation.

CHAPTER IV.

HAVING, in the conclusion of the preceding chapter, indulged the reader with a retrospective glance of our hero's life, and thus divested his character and motives of the mystery in which they were previously involved, we must accompany him in his search after Abel Neale.

Normanton had traced the divine through several towns in Spain, and found, in every instance, that the object of his pursuit had quitted the place a few days before his arrival. The houses in which Abel had been wont to sojourn were situated in obscure streets, and Normanton was therefore surprised to find the house to which he was directed in Barcelona one of a contrary description. It was old and gloomy enough, it is true, but it was spacious, and its style of archi-

tecture indicated that it was then, or had been, the abode of a person of some consequence. It nevertheless exhibited certain external marks, so exactly corresponding with the account he had received of it, that he had no hesitation in prosecuting his inquiry. His summons was answered by an old grey-headed domestic, who, although he betrayed, by his answers, that the name by which Normanton was instructed to ask for the divine was not strange to him, made, at first, no answer to the question. When, however, the visitor pronounced the words which formed the passport to the confidence of Neale and his friends, and a knowledge of which our hero had been so fortunate as to obtain in the course of his researches in England, the porter bowed his head in respectful acknowledgment, but replied that the party inquired for had quitted Barcelona in the course of the preceding week.

Normanton, again baffled in his pursuit, could not conceal his disappointment; but demanded of his informant, in a somewhat hasty manner, whither the clergyman was gone. The man hesitated; and then, bidding the querist to tarry there for a few minutes, until his return, quitted him, and proceeded towards a door which opened at the further end of the hall. Normanton, doubting the veracity of his informant, and, suspecting that the object of his search was actually in the house, followed the domestic, with the intention of satisfying himself, if possible, on the point.

Accordingly, treading closely on the heels of his precursor, he found himself in a spacious apartment, adorned with antique furniture, which, although faded, spoke of former magnificence and cost. At the upper end of the room sat a female, reading by the light of two candles, which were placed on a table before her. She was very young, apparently about eighteen, not very tall, but exquisitely moulded, and with a countenance—

“Call it not pale, but fair;”—

which beamed with so much expression and sweetness, that Normanton, despite the prejudices which most men entertain in favour of the style of beauty peculiar to the women of their own country, could not help mentally pronouncing her the most lovely creature he had ever beheld.

Had Henry been previously aware that a lady was the only occupant of the chamber, it is fair to presume that he would not have ventured to intrude upon her privacy; but, having proceeded too far to retreat without explanation and apology, he emerged from the gloom in which, from the inadequacy of the two candles to illuminate the apartment, he was at first involved, and advanced to the table at which the damsels was sitting.

The lady arose, evidently somewhat surprised by the appearance of a strange and unannounced visitor; but she did not shriek out or fall down in a fit;—she could have done no more, had the being before her been a ghost or a griffin; between

which, and a handsome and graceful Englishman, there are, it is presumed, some shades of difference, not altogether undistinguishable by a maiden of eighteen.

Normanton, anxious to remove the unfavourable impression, which he could not but feel his unexpected presence was calculated to make on the mind of the lady, repeated his inquiries for the divine by the latter's *nom de voyage*, adding the cabalistic words which had worked their wonders on her servant, and concluded by frankly avowing his suspicions that the clergyman was in the house, and appealing to her for a solution of his doubts on the subject.

Struck as was the visitor by the first sight of the lady, it will be readily imagined that his prepossessions were, in no ordinary degree, strengthened, when he heard her reply to him in English; a little broken, it is true, but having, for his ears, a charm which the purest pronunciation from more homely lips would not have possessed.

Her answer, prefaced by many expressions of respect and regard for the object of his inquiry, was to the effect, that the divine, although recently an inmate in that house, was no longer so; that his departure was sudden, and his destination unknown.

To doubt the veracity of lips of such a form and hue, was a species of treason which could never for a moment have harboured in the heart of so gallant a cavalier as Henry Normanton;

who, be it remarked, with a consistency for which love-stricken young gentlemen are remarkable, overwhelmed the lady with thanks for the very information which, when given by her domestic, had elicited an expression of feeling very different from that of gratitude.

The lady, having given her visitor all the intelligence in her power, made him a slight bow, as if to intimate that her part in the conversation was performed; while Normanton, who, as he could claim no personal acquaintance with Abel Neale, had no material for prolonging the interview, felt that, consistently with good breeding, he could not remain longer in her presence. With a reluctance, therefore, that even the grace with which he took his *congé* could not altogether conceal, he turned from the lovely being upon whom he could have gazed for ever; and, when the massive door of the mansion had closed upon him, and he found himself alone in the street, the occurrences of the last ten minutes appeared to him as a delightful vision, which he would have given the world to recall.

Normanton lingered, for some time, in Barcelona and its vicinity, in the hope of regaining a clue by which to trace Abel Neale; but, after exhausting his patience in fruitless inquiries, through every channel by which he deemed it prudent to make them, he gave up the pursuit in despair.

A life of inactivity was as repugnant to our hero's habits and feelings as it was incompatible with his circumstances, the slender pecuniary

supply which he had been prevailed upon to accept from Lord Peterborough having been nearly exhausted. Nothing, therefore, remained for him but to embrace the offer of a command which had been made to him by his lordship, whom he accordingly proceeded to join.

The earl had, in the mean time, penetrated into Valencia, and had established himself in the capital, which he entered on the fourth of February, 1706. Normanton, on his arrival at his lordship's quarters, found that the latter could not immediately receive him, and he therefore waited his leisure in a sort of ante-room, in which were Dennis Mulrooney, now advanced to the rank of sergeant, and a private soldier, who was occasionally employed as a courier, and was, at that moment, in attendance for despatches then in preparation.

Normanton, who, with the eye of an old soldier, had, in his progress, remarked an improvement in the appearance of the British army, inquired of the sergeant by what means the general had contrived to raise an additional regiment of cavalry.

"Is it raised?" was the reply; "O then ye may say that, for the general mounted a regiment of foot; and if that's not raising it, it's myself cannot tell you what is."

"But," observed Normanton, "the evolutions of horse and foot are so dissimilar, that your newly-raised troopers must have been a little awkward in the outset."

"Sorrow a bit of it," said the sergeant; "their first charge was the most iligant thing in life, barring every third man was under his horse's belly, and Terry Flinn, to the fore here, had his mare shot under him by his own pistol." Then perceiving a cloud gathering on the brow of his comrade, he added, "Never came truer words out of a priest's mouth, and that ye know right well, Terry: by the same token the poor baste was shot by a slug behind her left ear; and how would it come there, and the enemy in front, if ye did not turn your back on them; and it is 'nt the likes of Terry Flinn would be after doing that same, I 'm thinking."

Terry's displeasure yielded to the concluding compliment to his valour, while he said "That's true for ye, Dennis"—

At this moment, the entrance of a messenger from the council with despatches, with which Terry was enjoined to depart without delay, cut short the dialogue between the two Irishmen; and Normanton was left alone with Mulrooney, of whom he requested the particulars of the conversion of a regiment of infantry into cavalry, which had been effected by the earl.

The manner in which this extraordinary metamorphosis was performed was every way worthy of the romantic spirit, and love of dramatic effect, for which Peterborough was celebrated. He had, it appeared, drawn out a regiment of infantry on the side of a hill, near Orpesa; and, after having reviewed them, he turned to the officers, and

inquired of them how they should like to see the fine fellows before them mounted and equipped for cavalry service. On their replying that nothing would afford them more gratification, he ordered the regiment to march forward, when, on turning the edge of the hill, they were surprised by the sight of eight hundred horses, with saddles and accoutrements complete. The earl then commanded the soldiers, among whom, it should be remarked, there were several dismounted dragoons, to mount their horses, and a regiment of cavalry, created as it were by the wand of an enchanter, was before him. The fact is, that Peterborough, in the sort of partisan warfare in which he was engaged, had long felt the deficiency in his cavalry; and, in order to its augmentation, had collected two hundred horses at Nules, and six hundred more in his excursions through the country, of which, having ordered the saddles and other accoutrements round by sea, he disposed in the manner which we have described.

The sergeant had scarcely finished his explanation, when Normanton, understanding that the earl was then disengaged, sent in his name, and requested the honour of an interview, which was immediately granted.

“ Ha ! ” exclaimed the earl, on the entrance of his visitor, “ my military critic, as I live ! arrived to verify my presentiment, that we should meet again ere long. And pray in what adventures of love or war have you been engaged since we

parted ; or, jesting aside, how have you sped in Barcelona ? ”

“ Badly as may be, my lord,” was the reply ; “ in fact, I have encountered disappointment at the very moment in which I deemed the prize within my reach.”

Normanton having no longer a motive for concealing the nature of his business in Barcelona, briefly explained to Peterborough the object of his visit to that city ; and, without naming the individual of whom he was in quest, stated that he had lost all clue to his retreat, and concluded by expressing his readiness to embrace the earl’s offer of a commission in the British army.

“ Captain Normanton,” replied the nobleman, “ I sincerely regret the miscarriage of your errand, and I would that it had prospered, even though it were to my own loss : but it is an ill wind, they say, that blows nobody good. By your failure I have gained an officer ; and I am happy in having it in my power to nominate you to a troop of horse, the command of which has recently become vacant by the death of its captain, whose place I shall be glad to supply by an officer of your gallantry and experience. In the mean time, however, I think I can throw some light upon the history of the mysterious damsel to whom you introduced yourself in your search after the fugitive divine.”

Peterborough then gave a description of the house in which the fair Spaniard resided ; and

then inquired of Normanton if it corresponded with the scene of his adventure.

The latter admitted its correctness in every particular.

"Then," exclaimed the earl, "I give you joy, since you have been favoured with an interview for which half the officers in the British army would have given their ears; though few of them would have used their advantage with the discretion which you exhibited on the occasion."

His lordship then proceeded to put Normanton in possession of a few particulars of the lady's history, which we shall briefly give, with some explanatory interpolations and addenda of our own.

Juana was the daughter of Don Guzman, a wealthy Catalan, residing at Barcelona, who had married very late in life, and whose mind, naturally prone to superstition, becoming enfeebled by age, was, for a considerable period before his death, completely under the dominion of the priesthood. The most distinguished of those who, for sordid purposes, haunted him in his dying moments, was the Prior of the monastery of San Josef, whose ambition, the disappointment of which in his youth had induced him to assume the cowl, was at last gratified by his promotion to the chief office in the community of which he was a member. Now the worthy prior, in whatever degree he might have been chargeable with neglect of the spiritual welfare of his convent, was by no means indifferent to its temporalities. To make his influence with the

dying Guzman available to the augmentation of the revenues of the establishment, was a project worthy of the prior's pious zeal.

The wily priest, however, took his measures with the craft and caution which marked his character; and fearing that, by proposing to Guzman to disinherit his daughter in favour of the convent, he might shock those feelings of parental affection, which, despite the growing imbecility of the old man's mind, yet lingered in his bosom, he determined to obtain such a contingent interest in the will, as the prior, by the exertion of a little ingenuity, might render equivalent to a positive bequest.

Don Guzman, it appears, entertained some eccentric notions, which operated more strongly on his conduct in proportion as his powers of reasoning on their propriety became weakened. Among them was an impression in favour of early marriages, a prejudice which probably originated in his individual experience of the inexpediency of forming a matrimonial connexion late in life; and he had often been heard to declare, that his daughter should marry before she was eighteen, or not at all.

The prior, aware of the old man's sentiments on this subject, had turned them to account; for, on the will of the deceased being opened, it was discovered that he had left his wealth to his daughter Juana, provided that she married, with the consent of her guardian and nearest relative, Don Garcias, before she completed her eighteenth

year. If, however, she remained single until that period, or married without such consent, the property was to pass to the prior; one half for the benefit of the convent, and the other moiety to be appropriated in such a manner as he, in his piety, should deem expedient; subject, "nevertheless," as the lawyers have it, to the payment of a small annual stipend to such religious establishment as, in the event of her determining on taking the veil, she might select.

It is proper to add, what however the reader will probably have guessed, that this testamentary arrangement was not brought about by the prior, without a proper understanding between him and Don Garcias, to whom, as a needy man, he promised a splendid reward, to be paid out of the moiety at the priest's disposal, in the event of his concurring in the scheme, by withholding his consent to Juana's marriage. Now Don Garcias, as the prior well knew, was not a man likely to be deterred by scruples of conscience from joining in any plan which promised to put money in his pocket, without peril of his neck; but deeming, naturally enough, that the whole of a good thing was more desirable than a part, he thought that if he could "weather" on the priest, by securing his ward's hand for himself, it would make him a rich man at once, and be an excellent joke into the bargain.

True it was, the concurrence of another party, namely, the lady herself, was essential to the

success of this notable counter-plot ; yet, as he possessed the power of reducing her to the Hobsonian alternative, of taking " himself or none," he did not despair of compassing his object, to which he accordingly applied with an energy worthy of a better cause, and a younger man. Reasonable as it may appear, that seventeen should desire to take refuge in the experience of sixty, young ladies are remarkable for an obstinate adherence to the contrary opinion ; and Juana was not an exception to the rest of her sex in this particular.

I cannot take upon myself to state, that, at so early an age, Juana had ever thought about a husband : but if she had, it would appear that her *beau ideal* of one had not ferret eyes and a bottle nose ; for, when her guardian made his proposals, in form, for her hand, she burst into such an immoderate fit of laughter, as, in the ears of any other man, would have rung the knell of his hopes, and silenced his presumption for ever. Don Garcias, however, was not thus to be discouraged, since, notwithstanding the embellishments already alluded to, and certain memoranda which Time and Bacchus had made upon his visage, he entertained too exalted an opinion of his person, to suppose that she would hesitate between himself and a life of celibacy, to which, as it never entered into his calculation that any man would be fool enough to wed a girl without a ducat, he deemed he had the power to condemn her.

Considering, therefore, that he had the game in his own hands, he resolved to play it out, and accordingly continued to persecute her with his disgusting attentions, until from being, as he was in the first instance, a mark for her ridicule, he became, at last, the object of her unqualified detestation and horror. Resisting the persuasions and even threats, which her hoary suitor used to induce her to quit her paternal home, for what he was pleased to term the protection of her guardian's roof, Juana continued to live in the mansion which we have described, for a considerable period after her father's decease, attended only by Pedro, the aged domestic to whom allusion has already been made, and two or three female servants.

It was during her residence there, that the Protestant divine, of whom Normanton had been in quest, being hotly pursued by his bigoted enemies, took refuge in the house, the door of which had been accidentally left open, and thus eluded their vigilance. Being, however, shortly afterwards, discovered by old Pedro, to whom, as the only means of clearing himself from the suspicions naturally created by his situation, he frankly avowed his character and the circumstances of danger in which he was placed.

Pedro, whatever were his religious prejudices, was a kind-hearted man, and would rather have encountered the utmost rigour of ecclesiastical persecution than have been the betrayer of innocent blood. He, therefore, bade the fugitive remain

in his hiding-place, until he had taken the instructions of his mistress on the matter. Juana, moved by that generous sympathy with the unfortunate which is a characteristic of youth, and, I may add, of her sex in general, instantly declared that the rights of hospitality should never be violated in the house of her ancestors, while she was its mistress ; and that, as long as the stranger deemed himself safe beneath her roof, he was welcome to its protection.

Carefully concealed from the observation of all visitors, but, at the same time, in free and friendly intercourse with its inmates, Mr. Neale remained in Juana's dwelling for some weeks, in the course of which he contrived to acquaint his friends in England of the place of his retreat. The mild and unassuming manners of the divine soon won for him the regard of his Catholic friends ; and although, opposed to the prejudices of their religious education, his zealous labours for their conversion to a purer faith were not crowned with the immediate success for which he prayed, the good seed fell not altogether upon barren ground ; while those who were unconvinced by his arguments, could not but yield their respect to the sincerity with which they were urged.

Mr. Neale, however, would not have abandoned the field of his labours, with even the remotest prospect of a harvest, but for an event which rendered it no longer safe for him to remain in his place of refuge. It happened that Pedro had one evening been despatched on an errand, to a

place at some distance, by his mistress, who was sitting alone in a little room, in which she passed much of her time, when she was disagreeably interrupted by the entrance of her guardian.

Don Garcias had been performing his devotions in the temple of his favourite god, Bacchus ; and, it would seem, had sacrificed his discretion at the altar ; there being a familiarity in his salutation, which surprised while it alarmed her. His manner, at last, became so offensive, that she rose from her seat, and, with the flush of outraged modesty upon her cheek, informed him that, if he persisted, she would summon her domestics. To this the inebriated ruffian replied, that he knew Pedro was not in the house, and that, with respect to the female servants, he had taken care to secure the door which separated their apartment from the rest of the building. Having said this with an air of triumph, he renewed his attack upon the defenceless girl, until the latter, in an agony of terror, shrieked out for help, and endeavoured to release herself from his grasp. Her assailant uttered a laugh of derision at her ineffectual attempts at escape, when the door, which he had taken the precaution to secure, was suddenly forced open, and Neale rushed into the apartment.

“ My child,” he exclaimed, as he entered, “ the Lord hath heard thy cry for succour, and hath sent thee deliverance.” The minister was, by some years, older than Garcias, but, unlike the latter, his strength, in whatever degree it might

have yielded to Time, had not been impaired by intemperance.

The culprit, surprised and enraged at the interference of the divine, made a show of resistance; but the latter, soon overpowering his antagonist, seized him by the collar, and, with a sweep of his arm, not only ejected him from the room, but assisted him a few steps down a stair-case immediately opposite to the door. Garcias, however, when, having put a flight of stairs between him and his antagonist, he conceived himself out of his reach, turned round, and with an energy of gesticulation and expression, which left no doubt of his sincerity, denounced vengeance both on his ward and her deliverer; and then rushed out of the house, as if determined on putting his threats into immediate execution.

Juana, overwhelmed by conflicting feelings of gratitude to her preserver, and apprehensions of the consequences of his interference, both to him and to herself, attempted to give utterance to her emotions, but in vain. Mr. Neale, perceiving her distress, advanced to save her from sinking on the floor, when she caught his extended hand, and dropping her head upon his shoulder, burst into tears.

When, soothed by the minister's judiciously applied consolation, she had, in some measure, recovered from her paroxysm, she acknowledged her obligation to him in a few hurried, but heartfelt, expressions, and then implored him

by timely flight to save himself from the malice of her guardian. Neale, unwilling as he felt to abandon the poor girl in her distress, could not but feel that, by remaining, he should, in all probability, involve her in his ruin ; and therefore, after taking an affectionate and grateful farewell of his generous protectress, quitted her hospitable roof, uncertain of his way, and doubtful whether in avoiding Charybdis he might not encounter Scylla.

Juana, as soon as she had, as she deemed, provided for the present safety of the clergyman, began to reflect more calmly upon her own position ; and, considering that even if Don Garcias should not deem it expedient to put his threat into execution as regarded herself, she should still be subjected to the disgusting persecution of his addresses, she resolved on clandestinely quitting her home as soon as she could find a refuge to which to fly.

She had a distant relation, the abbess of a convent in Valencia, to whom she contrived to despatch a letter wherein she stated the circumstances of difficulty in which she was placed, and expressing her intention of becoming a member of the community : a resolution to which nothing but the cruel persecution she was exposed to, and the absence of any friend to whom to look for counsel or protection could have driven her.

It was during the interval between her writing to the abbess and receiving an answer to her application, that her interview with Normanton

occurred ; and having thus introduced the heroine of our story, it behoves us to return to the hero of it.

CHAPTER V.

THE Earl of Peterborough had not long taken up his quarters in the city of Valencia before a body of the enemy, amounting to four thousand men, were detached for the purpose of attacking him in that position ; and had advanced as far as Fuente de Niguera. He was, however, too vigilant a general to be taken by surprise ; indeed, by means of stratagem and spies, of which he made, it may be, too unscrupulous a use, as well as by the correspondence which he kept up, both with the clergy and the ladies, he usually contrived to gain intelligence of his adversaries' movements in time to counteract them. Accordingly, he no sooner heard of the advance of the detachment alluded to, than he despatched, to meet it, a force consisting of eight hundred foot and four hundred horse, the latter including the troop to which Normanton had been appointed.

This body left Valencia at night, and, as if their absent general had infused into them a portion of his own energy, proceeded with such rapidity and circumspection, that they passed the river Xucar without being discovered, and completely surprised the enemy in his encampment.





Confused by the suddenness and vigour of the assault, and uncertain of the number of their opponents, the party attacked were thrown into disorder, and gave way in all directions. The main body, after an ineffectual attempt to rally, were soon compelled to retreat, and were pursued by the British forces. The English leader, however, perceiving that a portion of his infantry, consisting chiefly of Scots, was hotly pressed by a party of the enemy to which the panic had not yet extended, despatched a troop of horse, under the command of Normanton, to their succour.

Eager to reap brighter laurels than those which are gathered in the pursuit of an unresisting foe, our hero obeyed the order with alacrity, and was soon in the thickest of the fight. His arrival, however, although it gave more courage to the party to whose aid he came, did not immediately turn the current of the contest, which was maintained with great obstinacy on both sides. At length the enemy gave ground, and victory declared for the British; when, in the very moment of triumph, a shot struck Normanton's horse, which fell to the ground with his rider. The latter, rendered senseless by the shock, was with difficulty extricated, by two Highlanders, from his perilous situation, although not in time to save his ankle from being dislocated by the weight of the animal which had fallen upon his leg.

After the defeat of the enemy, the first object of the commanding officer of the British detachment was the care of his wounded; many of



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whom, including Normanton, were not in a condition to be conveyed to head-quarters, or, indeed, to be removed to any distance from the scene of battle. A party was therefore despatched for the purpose of reconnoitring the neighbourhood, and soon returned with the intelligence that the nearest place at which the wounded could be left with safety, was a nunnery, about a mile from the field, to which the commanding officer determined to proceed in person with his disabled comrades and an escort of dragoons.

On arriving at the convent their application for admittance, made through the interpretation of the bell, instead of being answered by the opening of the gate, only caused the projection of a countenance, by no means indicative of sweetness of temper, from a side window. The portress, who had taken this method of ascertaining the quality of the applicants before she ventured on admitting them, was not very well satisfied with the result of her examination, since, instead of withdrawing the bolts, she inquired, in no conciliatory tone, what they wanted.

The officer replied that he wished to speak with the superior of the establishment.

The other informed him that the abbess was at her devotions, and could not be spoken with.

The officer said he should be sorry to disturb her, and that he would wait her leisure for a reasonable time, but that, as his business was urgent, he trusted that he should be favoured with an interview with as little delay as might be.

The portress made no reply, but shut the window ; and, after the lapse of some minutes, the outer gates were thrown open, but, instead of offering a free passage to the British officer and his party, disclosed an iron grating, which, being drawn across the other extremity of the arch which formed the entrance to the building, opposed their further progress.

They did not wait long before the abbess herself advanced to the grating with as much dignity as consisted with a diminutive form, clothed in an exuberance of flesh which seemed to imply that her fasts were rather numerous than long, and were usually kept between breakfast and dinner.

In answer to her inquiry as to the nature of the officer's commands, the latter briefly stated that he was accompanied by a few of his comrades who had been wounded, and for whom he requested the hospitalities of the convent.

The abbess said, that while she commiserated the situation of the invalids, she was left to regret that the rules of her establishment, which forbade the admission of strangers of the other sex, precluded her from a compliance with his request. She added, however, that there was a farm-house within two furlongs, where, she doubted not, he would be able to obtain every accommodation and comfort which the case of his comrades required.

To this the officer responded, that, whatever might be the letter of the conventional regulations, he found it difficult to believe that the spirit of

them could be opposed to that grand duty of charity which, towards the sick in particular, had been enjoined by the precepts, and enforced by the example of the great Author of that religion of which her establishment was an emanation ; that, with regard to the refuge to which she had pointed, he could not think of leaving his wounded where they would be utterly defenceless, in the event of an attack from any stragglers of the enemy, while within the walls of the convent, they would be secure from that contingency.

The lady replied by again referring to the rules of the institution over which she presided, adding, that degradation from her office would be the consequence of her disobeying them.

The officer met the iterated objection by observing, that she could not but perceive that his party was sufficiently strong to enable him to secure quarters for his invalids in the convent without her consent ; a fact which would be considered, by any reasonable tribunal, as an ample justification of her compliance, especially as resistance, while it could avail her nothing, would subject the edifice to the injury consequent upon a forcible entry.

The abbess, glad of a pretext for following the dictates of a really benevolent heart, replied, that, under such circumstances, there was nothing left for her but to submit, and that his invalids should have every comfort in her power to bestow. While, however, she thus literally made a virtue

of necessity, she expressed a hope that the community would be treated with the respect due to their sex and order.

The commandant assured her that the party whom it was his painful duty to intrude upon her hospitality, should be confined to any portion of the building which she might be pleased to assign to them; that he would leave with them a petty officer who would be responsible for their good conduct, and that he would take care that she should be indemnified for any charge to which she might be subjected on their account.

Having seen his wounded comrades comfortably quartered in the convent, the officer left them with a small guard of troopers under the command of Sergeant Mulrooney, with directions for them to proceed to head-quarters as soon as they were in a condition to bear the journey.

Normanton, although the injuries he received in his fall proved to be of a more serious character than was at first apprehended, having youth and a sound constitution on his side, soon began to recover from the effects of his mishap; but, as it was not deemed prudent for him to return to Valencia unattended, he was compelled to remain at the convent until the whole of the wounded were in a state to proceed.

The abbess, by the attention which she paid to the invalids, in causing them to be furnished with every thing their situation required, amply redeemed her pledge to the commandant; and, with regard to Normanton, no sooner was he pronounced

convalescent, than his table was supplied with the most delicate of viands, and graced by a flask of wine, the very perfume of which was a luxury.

It happened, one evening, when he was sitting alone in the apartment which had been assigned to him, that Mulrooney entered, and reported that a man was, at that moment, receiving alms at the gate of the convent, whom Barney, one of the troopers forming the guard, had, in accidentally passing the spot, recognised as one of the robbers under the command of his old acquaintance, Captain Roque.

Normanton directed that the supposed mendicant should be seized and brought before him; which having been done, he informed the prisoner that he had been recognised as one of a gang of robbers who had lately infested Catalonia, and declared that he would pistol him with his own hand if he did not instantly disclose the purport of his visit to the convent; about which, it should have been stated, the man had been observed to be lurking for some time before he made his application for alms at the gate.

The man prevaricated very much at first, but, finding that he had to do with one who would not be trifled with, he, at last, acknowledged that he had been reconnoitring the convent previously to an attack which Roque, instigated by a knowledge of the massive plate which it contained, was meditating. He added, that the worthy chieftain, having found his late quarters in the neighbourhood of Barcelona somewhat too hot for him, had

resolved on trying his luck in Valencia, and that he was, with his gang, at that moment, concealed in a wood within about two furlongs of the object of his proposed attack.

All communication between the abbess and her guests had hitherto been made through the intervention of an old man who officiated as gardener, and thus it happened that neither she, nor any of the sisterhood, had been visible to Normanton or his troopers during their sojourn. Our hero, however, deeming it proper that the abbess should be made acquainted with the discovery which he had just made, sent a respectful message by the horticulturist, stating that he had a communication to make to her, and begging to be favoured with an interview.

Whether it was that the good lady had, in some degree, overcome her horror of a juxtaposition with one of the ruder sex, or, from the singularity of the application, concluded that the matter on which he desired to confer with her was one of importance, I know not; but the messenger speedily returned with the intelligence, that the abbess would be happy to see him in the refectory.

Normanton found her seated in a curiously carved elbow chair, while, before her, was a wine flask which indicated that the exquisitely chased goblet beside it was not placed there for the mere purpose of ornament. It would be a species of presumption, of which, I trust, I shall stand acquitted in the estimation of my readers, to insinuate that the handsome person and graceful

manners of our hero, could, for a moment, have had any influence on one who had so long, and doubtless with so much sincerity, renounced the world and its vanities ; but it is certain that her reception of her visitor was gracious to a degree beyond what even her ready acquiescence in his request could have led him to anticipate.

Normanton, after a brief apology for the intrusion, his excuse for which, he added, would be found in the urgency of the occasion, informed her of the disclosure which he had elicited from the captured robber, and submitted the expediency of her removing, with the nuns under her care, to a place of safety until the danger had passed by.

“ Am I to understand, then,” inquired the abbess, less alarmed by the communication than he had expected, “ that it is your intention to abandon the convent to the mercy of the banditti ?”

“ You are to understand, dearest lady,” was the reply, “ that, without reference to the protection to which your sex, and especially your hospitalities, entitle you from our hands, it consists not with the honour of a British officer to retreat before a horde of robbers, though they were as numerous as the leaves in yonder forest ; on the contrary, I speak but the sentiments of the gallant fellows whom I have the honour to command, when I say, that, sooner than surrender the convent to the spoilers, we would make our grave beneath its ruins. I may not, however, disguise from you that the marauders are in sufficient force

to render more than doubtful the issue of a contest with the party, few in number and enfeebled by their wounds, which I can oppose to them ; and, therefore, I would again urge upon you the prudence of your seeking a place of safety while free egress remains to you."

" I pray you, sir," rejoined the abbess, " forgive the momentary suspicion which crossed my mind. I should have better known an Englishman than to have wronged him by a doubt of his honour. I thank you for your counsel, but it becomes me not to be guided by it. God will keep his own, and I will trust in Him, and in the gallant men whose arms he will nerve for the combat in a righteous cause ; but if, for Thy wise purposes," she added, raising her eyes reverentially towards the Being she apostrophised, " the wicked be permitted to prevail against us, *fiat voluntas tua !*"

Normanton, finding his arguments of no avail in inducing his magnanimous hostess to quit the sanctuary of her walls, next applied himself to the task of providing for the reception of the expected visitants. On his questioning the captured robber, it appeared that his comrades, so far from suspecting the existence of a military force in the convent, had concerted with him that, in the event of his succeeding in gaining admittance to it and finding no obstacle to their enterprise, he should remain there in order to facilitate their entrance.

Our hero, satisfied upon this point, took his measures for the protection of the convent with so much circumspection, that the robbers on a nearer

approach could not, through the evidence either of their eyes or their ears, be undeceived in their opinion of its being utterly defenceless.

To his own men, who, on being mustered, amounted to no more than half a score capable of bearing arms, he addressed himself briefly to the effect, that he felt convinced that the helplessness of the beings who looked to them for protection would suggest a higher motive for their bearing themselves as British soldiers, in the approaching conflict, than the consideration that they had to deal with an enemy from whom they could expect no quarter.

He had scarcely finished, when the trampling of horses was heard, and, soon afterwards, the bell of the convent was rung, and admittance peremptorily demanded. Normanton, taking advantage of the short pause which ensued, reconnoitred the robbers through a loop-hole, and found that their number was thrice that of his own men, and that they were well armed, and provided with implements for forcing an entrance; which, on receiving no answer to their summons, they proceeded to apply.

The gate, however, yielded to their first attempt,—a facility which they naturally attributed to the good offices of their confederate. About a dozen of the assailants then flung themselves from their horses and advanced up the gateway towards the iron grating, to which allusion has already been made. Before, however, they could attempt the removal of this obstacle to their progress, they were greeted with so brisk a fire from

the troopers behind it, that they immediately fell back in disorder, and with some loss, upon their main body, who were still mounted at the gate.

After a few minutes' consultation they returned in greater numbers to the charge, but with no better success ; since the troopers, protected by a breastwork formed of mattrasses, were invulnerable from the shoulders downwards, while their fire, being directed on a dense mass of their besiegers, who had pushed into the gateway, did more execution than their first volley.

The robbers, after making several desperate attempts to dislodge the defending party by whom they were, on each occasion, greeted with a steady and destructive fire, drew off from the gate ; while the besieged, when the tramp of the retreating horses was no longer distinguishable, uttered a shout of triumph, which carried to the ears of the abbess and her affrighted flock the glad tidings of victory.

Their rejoicing, however, was of brief duration ; for while Normanton was engaged in examining into the condition of his little band, after the conflict, and attending to one of them who had been slightly wounded, a shriek was heard, proceeding from the apartment in which the females had taken refuge. Our hero, hastening to the spot, discovered, to his surprise, that the robbers, after their feigned retreat, had renewed the attack, at the rear of the convent ; and having, by means of ladders, succeeded in scaling the walls, were scattered throughout the building in quest of treasure,

and driving the terrified nuns before them in all directions.

The scene of confusion which ensued may be more easily conceived than described: the shrieks of the women, the shouts of the successful assailants, the clash of swords, and the report of fire-arms, forming a combination of sounds worthy of Pandemonium itself. The robbers having, for purposes of plunder, divided themselves into small parties, it became the policy of Normanton to keep his little band as much together as possible. Accordingly, after covering the retreat of the females to the chapel of the convent, he directed his force against the small detachments of the marauders, several of which he succeeded in defeating.

While thus engaged in the dormitory, his attention was arrested by a scream, proceeding from an adjoining apartment, and followed by a supplication for mercy, in a voice, which, although he had heard it but on one occasion, was as fresh in his memory as if it had been familiar to him from his boyhood. Forgetting every thing else in the feelings which were excited in his bosom by that thrilling cry, he rushed into the room whence it had issued, and beheld the young and lovely Juana at the feet of the captain of the ruffian band, one of his hands grasping her auburn locks, and the other holding the uplifted sword; while, with the most horrid imprecations and threats, he was endeavouring to extort from her a disclosure of the depository of the treasures of the convent.







CHAPTER VI.

WHETHER the Earl of Peterborough, becoming uneasy at the protracted stay of Normanton and his followers at the convent, had sent a party expressly to escort them to head-quarters, or whether that object had been combined with a more important one, for which the detachment had been ordered to that part of the country, does not appear; but it is certain that they were provided with the means of conveyance for such of the wounded as were not able to sit their horses.

A few hours' rest, however, being requisite for the newly arrived party, who had performed a long march, and it being also necessary that the corpses of those who had fallen should be interred, and other traces of the sanguinary conflict removed from the convent, it was determined that they should not set out on their return to the main body of the army, until the following day at noon.

The commander of the detachment, who had thus opportunely arrived to save their fellow-soldiers from destruction, having attended to the disposal of the dead and wounded, drew off his men to quarters which he had previously provided in the neighbourhood, leaving Normanton and his party in the convent until the morrow.

Our hero arose early the next morning and was busied in preparation for his departure. It happened that he had occasion to visit that part of the convent which had been appropriated as a hospital for his invalids, when, on passing along the corridor on his return, he was arrested by hearing his name pronounced in a soft voice ; and, turning to the quarter whence it proceeded, he perceived, at a sort of grating through which the nuns were permitted to communicate with their visitors, a female figure, so closely enveloped in a veil that her features were not distinguishable.

The tones, however, in which he was addressed, left him in no doubt as to the identity of the speaker with the fair Juana ; who, having thus succeeded in exciting his attention, said, “ I am aware, Señor, that not even the duty of expressing my gratitude for the service you have rendered me would justify my violation of the rules of the convent, and, you will probably think, of propriety also, in thus obtruding myself upon your notice—”

“ Lady,” rejoined Normanton, interrupting her, in his eagerness to disclaim any merit in the matter, “ the consciousness of deserving the gratitude which you are pleased to express, is a happiness for which I dare not hope ; since, although I am far from undervaluing my good fortune in having been the instrument of delivering you from the pollution of the ruffian’s touch, I cannot find any title to your favour on an act which the meanest soldier in my regiment would

have been as ready to perform: nay, to have done less would have been a dereliction of duty of which none but the basest coward could be guilty."

"The argument," replied the lady, "by which you would diminish the obligation, Señor, speaks more for your generosity than your logic, and will not cause me, for a moment, to underrate the importance of the service to myself, or the risk at which it was performed by you. Yet, I should have left it to your liberality to give me credit for the feelings which I must ever entertain towards the preserver of my life, and of that which is still dearer, had it not been in my power to afford you certain information, of which you were lately desirous, and which, I trust, may yet be valuable to you."

"May I hope," inquired Normanton, "that it refers to your venerable guest, the Protestant divine?"

"The same," was the reply; "he has taken refuge in a cavern, on the banks of the Xucar, whereof, and of certain peculiarities of scenery by which the spot is indicated, this paper contains a description; I had it from a sure hand: take it, and may Heaven prosper your errand!"

As she spoke, she thrust the paper through the bars which separated them, and, after a moment's hesitation, drew from her finger a ring, in which was set a single diamond of extraordinary size and brilliancy, adding, in a tone which betrayed considerable emotion, "Farewell! we meet not again in this world; yet, take

this as a slight token of one in whose prayers you will be often and gratefully remembered.—Nay, pain me not by a refusal, nor think that you deprive me of aught in accepting it ;—this convent is my tomb, and it is idle to bury jewels with the dead !”

“ And can you seriously,” inquired Normanton, with earnestness, “ entertain the intention of immuring yourself for ever from a world which you were formed to grace by your virtues and to gladden by your smile ? Can you, in the bloom of youth and in the season of hope, voluntarily make a sacrifice which, so far from being required, must necessarily be disapproved by Him who created man for a wider sphere of action than the confines of the cloister ? But alas ! I know full well that your having taken refuge within these gloomy walls was the result of necessity, and not of your free choice. Yet, believe me, I found no presumptuous or selfish hope upon that knowledge : I ask for nothing—hope for nothing—but to be useful to you, and to deliver you from a fate which I cannot contemplate without dread ; and though it would be at once my pride and happiness to effect this by a title to which a monarch might aspire, I seek not to take an ungenerous advantage of the cruel circumstances in which you are placed. I can ensure you an honourable asylum in my native land, and such an escort thither, as it may comport with your delicacy and reputation to accept.”

“ Señor,” rejoined Juana, after a pause, during



—



you are scarcely likely to light upon in a day's march; for, to speak the truth, I have not one ducat to rub against another."

"Such," exclaimed the prior, "are the bitter fruits of riot and intemperance! Your ungodly life has given much scandal in Barcelona, and a fearful reckoning will await you unless you mend your manners."

"My manners, good prior," rejoined the hoary profligate, "are, like my doublet, past mending I fear; but, in order that you may the more speedily be freed from my presence, I will come at once to the object of my visit, which is to solicit the favour of a small instalment in advance of my share of the spoil."

"Spoil!" echoed the priest, "What have I to do with spoil?"

"I mean the forfeited inheritance of the young lady," was the explanation.

"How!" said the other, in affected surprise, "I do not remember to have seen your name in the will."

"Possibly not," replied Garcias; "but you may, perhaps, remember a certain contract between us, my part of which having been performed, I hope you will not hesitate to acquit yourself of yours."

"Liar and fool!" exclaimed the churchman, who, finding that his visitor was not to be got rid of, at once threw off the mask, "to suppose I knew not of your attempt to grasp the whole of the wealth, in the character of the damsel's husband? Do you think that I would ever have had

you nominated to the office of her guardian if I had not deemed your satyr-like visage an ample security against your playing me false in the manner you have attempted? No, no! Señor, I am not the blind ass for which you take me: by violating your part of the agreement, you have absolved me from mine; and, having played a desperate game for the whole of the stakes, when you might have played a safe one for a part, you must abide by the consequences of your folly and conceit."

"Then I am to understand," said the Don, "that you will not pay me the stipulated price of my concurrence in your scheme?"

"Not a rial of it, credit me," was the laconic reply of the prior.

"Then," retorted the other, "I will proclaim your villany to the world."

"And who, think you," inquired the priest, with the most provoking coolness, "would, for a moment, weigh the word of a sot and a profligate against the reputation and fair fame of the Prior of San Josef? But, for your own sake, beware how you breathe a syllable of this matter in any human ear. You know my power, and your own misdeeds, and will do well to take heed, lest, in lieu of your tattered doublet, I fit you with a San Benito."*

"False priest!" roared Garcias, losing, in the bitterness of his rage and disappointment, all

* The dress in which heretics are burned at an *Auto da Fé*.

regard to consequences, “I will have revenge, though, for the one sweet moment of its enjoyment, I pay the penalty of my life! Look to yourself, proud churchman!”

Having thus denounced vengeance on his accomplice in villainy, he rushed out of the convent before, even had it been prudent, it was possible to detain him. The prior, however, secure as he felt himself, in the panoply of his own reputation for sanctity, against the other's attempts to injure his fame, was not the less disposed to crush the worm which had turned upon him; and, accordingly, resolved on seizing the first opportunity of removing the reptile from his path for ever.

Leaving these worthies to the digestion of their several schemes of mischief and revenge, we will return to others of our *dramatis personæ*, the contemplation of whose characters may be more agreeable to the reader.

CHAPTER VII.

A MARCH of about five and twenty miles brought the invalids and their escort to the banks of the Xucar, which lay about midway between Fuente de Higuera and Valencia. At this spot the commandant of the detachment ordered a halt for a few hours, which, as so favourable an opportunity might never recur, Normanton resolved on

devoting to a search for the hiding-place of the Protestant divine. He accordingly set out, taking with him Barney, in whose charge he could leave his horse at that point of the journey at which it would be necessary to proceed on foot.

Although the paper which had been delivered to him by Juana for the purpose of guiding him in his search was as explicit as language could make it, yet, the circumstance of there being no beaten path, and the consequent necessity of identifying the features of the country with its description in his instructions, tended to retard his progress. At length their course, which had at first been nearly level, began to ascend ; and, after travelling about three miles, he found himself upon the verge of a precipice formed by a narrow but deep chasm, at the bottom of which, dashing over the rocks that impeded its course, flowed a rapid stream, one of the tributaries to the Xucar.

On further examination, he discovered that, at about half a mile from the spot on which he was thus brought to a pause, the chasm was wider and the descent much less precipitous. Resigning his horse to the charge of Barney, Normanton proceeded until he reached a point at which he could venture to descend. With considerable difficulty, and at no trifling personal risk, he succeeded, by the aid of the bushes with which the sides of the declivity were overgrown, to lower himself about fifty feet, when he arrived at a ledge or platform extending about a quarter of a mile up the ravine, and just broad enough to form a foot-path.

He advanced with cautious step, keeping his eye averted from the gulf which was yawning beneath him, lest the sight should create a dizziness which might be fatal. On coming to the termination of this natural gallery, he perceived, on the opposite side of the chasm, the interspace being about ten or twelve feet, the mouth of a cavern which penetrated about twenty yards into the precipice.

Following his instructions, he struck the ledge of the rock four times with the hilt of his sword, and anxiously awaited the result. It should be mentioned that, apprehensive lest his military exterior might awaken the fears or suspicions of the divine, Normanton had thrown an ample cloak over his uniform, and had exchanged his helmet for a Spanish hat.

After an interval of a few minutes, a figure slowly and cautiously advanced to the mouth of the cave and surveyed his visitor for a brief space with a keen and scrutinizing look. He was a somewhat clumsily built man, about the middle height, but exhibiting a muscularity and vigour of limb not usually possessed by persons at his age, which might be about sixty; his hair and beard, which during his retirement had been suffered to grow, were nearly white; his forehead was broad and projected over his eyes, which were large, black, and piercing; his nose was aquiline, and his cheek-bones high and prominent, while the general expression of his strongly-marked countenance was that of energy and decision. He

was habited in a sort of tunic, which was buttoned close up to his throat and appeared to have seen service, while, from a broad belt which was buckled tightly about his waist, was suspended a stout cut-and-thrust sword.

Abel Neale, after surveying his visitor, for some seconds, with close attention, challenged the latter to give the pass-word; to which having received a satisfactory reply, the divine continued :

“It is well: and now may I crave thy name?”

“Henry Normanton,” was the answer.

“The second son of Everard Normanton?” pursued the querist.

“The same,” responded Henry.

Neale again rivetted his eyes upon the other's features, and, after perusing them, he continued—“Henry Normanton was yet an infant when I saw him last; but in the countenance of the man I trace the lineaments of the child, and I see before me the son of mine ancient and honoured friend: thou art welcome.”

As the clergyman spoke, he drew from the side of the cavern a rudely hewn plank, and, with apparent ease, pushing it across the chasm, lodged one end of it on the ledge of rock on which Normanton was standing; when keeping it steady by placing his foot firmly on the other extremity, he invited his visitor to pass over, which he did in safety, and the temporary bridge was drawn back into the cave.

After replying to some inquiries of the divine, Normanton explained to him the purport of his

visit to Spain, and, in acquainting him with the adventures which he had encountered since his landing, dwelt, it may be, with more eloquence upon the grace and beauty of the fair Juana than, in Neale's opinion, the subject demanded; for, without replying to the young gentleman's encomiums, he recurred to the injustice he had experienced from his uncle, and exclaimed :

“ And this is Gervase Normanton, once so confident in his own honour, that the slightest distrust of it would kindle the blush upon his cheek and the lightning in his eye! Yet thus it is ever with those who, trusting in their own strength, spurn the aid of that grace which alone can shield them in the hour of temptation! But, my son, thou shalt have justice if the testimony of an old man can obtain it for thee.”

“ Yet,” observed Normanton, “ your testimony, my venerable friend, will avail me little unless it be given in an English court of justice.”

“ I know it,” was the rejoinder, “ and I hail the circumstance of my evidence being thus indispensable as an indication of the Divine will, that I should quit a country where I am no longer permitted to be useful, for one in which I may not only be the instrument of obtaining justice for thee, but, with His grace, of saving a sinner's soul alive.”

“ I shall be for ever thankful to you, Sir,” said Normanton, “ although you have a higher motive and a purer delight in the performance of a good action than the assurance of my gratitude

can supply ; but, I would ask, by what route and in what manner do you propose to travel ? Beset as you are by enemies, you will scarcely reach a Spanish port in safety."

" Is the Arm," inquired Neale, " which has hitherto protected me from the fury of the bigots who have persecuted me, shortened that it cannot save ? "

" Far be from me the impious presumption of doubting for a moment His superintending providence ; but, unless you can point out a more advisable plan, I would propose to you to accompany me, under the safeguard of the detachment which I have just left, to Valencia ; when I know that, if the personal friendship of the Earl of Peterborough should not prompt him to enter warmly into my views, his chivalric honour would restrain him from delivering you up to your enemies."

" I will go with thee, my son," replied the divine.

" Then I pray you, reverend Sir," said the other, " hasten to quit this place, every moment spent in which cannot but be detrimental to a person of your years ; nay, despite the fire you have kindled here, the chill of this sunless dungeon has penetrated even to my young blood."

" The Saviour of the world," replied Neale, solemnly, " had not where to lay his head, and shall a sinful mortal, like myself, murmur because he rests not on a bed of down ? "

Then, observing Normanton's eye directed towards the weapon suspended from the girdle of



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the clergyman, the latter continued, "Ay, thou marvelllest to see an implement of war by the side of a man whose peculiar office it is to preach peace and good-will ; yet once only was it ever used by me, and then in defence, not of my life, but, of the Book of Life, yon precious volume," he added, pointing to a clasped Bible in a niche of the cave, "which the blind bigots of this benighted land would have torn from my bosom, and cast into the Moloch flame of their superstition." When he had finished, he drew the sword from its scabbard, and exhibited to Normanton, in several deep notches on its blade, the unequivocal evidences of a severe conflict.

The two Englishmen were preparing to quit the cavern, and were in the act of pushing forward the plank, when the sound of footsteps attracted their attention, and, looking up, they perceived, to their surprise, and to the discomfiture of Normanton in particular, four men, in the dress of the familiars of the Inquisition, advancing towards them, each armed with a musket.

The bridge, which had been thrust forth, was instantly withdrawn ; and our hero, finding that they had been observed by the strangers, and that concealment was consequently impossible, did not attempt to retreat into the interior, but, when the party halted opposite the entrance of the cavern, he inquired of them what they wanted.

They answered that they were emissaries of the Holy Office, and that they were instructed to

bring before that tribunal the heretic priest, Neale, whose surrender they demanded.

To this the clergyman, advancing to the side of his countryman, replied that, as a British subject and a Protestant divine, he did not acknowledge the authority whence the summons emanated, and that he should not obey it.

The men answered, that, in such case, they were prepared to enforce compliance ; and, making ready their muskets, declared that they would fire into the cave, if the two friends did not immediately replace the bridge and come forth.

The recess, as has been already stated, was not very deep, the extremity of it being within pistol shot of the platform on which their invaders were drawn up ; while the fire, which had been kindled at the back of the cave, rendered every object in it plainly discernible. Normanton had left his pistols in his holsters, and thus, like his companion, had no weapon but his sword, which, under such circumstances was, of course, useless.

The young soldier, in reply to the menace of the officials, stated that he was a captain of dragoons in the British army, that the person whose capture they desired was then under his protection, and that, therefore, they would molest him at their peril.

The man who appeared to command the party repeated his threat, which he prepared to put into execution by presenting his piece, and again called upon the divine to surrender.

"Life," replied Neale, "is not so sweet that I should hesitate between resigning my soul into the hands of Him who gave it, and surrendering my body to the tortures which would await me in your dungeons. 'Let me fall now into the hands of the Lord, for His mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hands of man.'"

Normanton, who rightly judged that the approach of the myrmidons of the Inquisition had not been observed by Barney, and that all hope of mortal aid in their emergency was therefore vain, retired to the back part of the cave while the divine was speaking, and, suddenly flinging his cloak from his shoulders, extinguished the fire, and thus rendered himself and his friend less obvious marks to their besiegers. Then, casting himself upon the ground, he called on Neale to follow his example, when the leader of the familiars of the Holy Office fired, and the clergyman immediately dropped to the earth; but whether from the effect of the shot, or in obedience to Normanton's admonition, the latter could not, at the moment, discover.

While our hero was crawling towards the spot on which his friend had fallen, he heard a rumbling noise, then a shriek of despair; and looking towards the mouth of the cave, he observed that the opposite side of the chasm was obscured by a cloud of dust. What was his astonishment, however, when, on the mist clearing off, he beheld the platform, which their opponents had just occupied, vacant!

Forgetting the risk to which he might be exposing himself, Normanton rushed to the entrance of the cavern, when a glance upwards, and another into the abyss, afforded him a fearful solution of the mystery. The ledge which formed a gallery along the opposite precipice, was overhung in many places, and particularly in front of the cavern, by masses of earth, a portion of which, previously loosened by the rains, had been detached by the vibration produced by the explosion of the musket, and, descending with irresistible force on the heads of the devoted officials, swept them into the torrent beneath! Their bodies, encountering the intervening projections of the rock in their fall, dropped lifeless into the stream, and Normanton beheld them rolling away on its swollen and turbid waves towards the Xucar.

His next thought was of his friend, who, on turning round, he was rejoiced to find had sustained no injury, and who, on comprehending the manner in which they had been freed from the officials, exclaimed, "Let us thank God, my son, for his goodness; for we have been mercifully, and yet how awfully, delivered!"

They knelt down together, and never were thanksgivings breathed with more sincerity and fervour to His throne, who had preserved them under circumstances in which the possibility of escape appeared to be utterly excluded.

Having finished their devotions, they quitted the cavern, and gained the summit of the mountain, where they were able to discover the path

by which the familiars of the Holy Office had approached, and which, by an intervening prominence, had been hidden from the observation of the dragoon. Barney, being questioned on the subject, stated that he had heard the report of a musket, succeeded by a noise as of distant thunder, but was unable to reach a point that overlooked the torrent, without abandoning the horses which had been left in his charge.

Normanton would have placed Mr. Neale on his own horse, and Barney strenuously protested against the “ould gentleman” travelling to the camp on foot, while a stout young fellow like himself was on the saddle; but the divine persisted in walking, and proceeded at a pace with which the soldiers, impeded as they were by the ruggedness of the road, had some difficulty in keeping up. When, however, they joined the detachment, he was prevailed upon to occupy a place in one of the vehicles which had been provided for the conveyance of the invalids.

Immediately on his arrival at the head-quarters of the British army, Normanton sought an interview with the Earl of Peterborough, who was alone, and, on the entrance of his visitor, exclaimed, “Ha, my critic of the cork-tree! or rather, I should say, the hero of Fuente de Higuera, whose theory, much as I admire it, is not to be compared with his practice. Seriously speaking, however, Captain Normanton, you are welcome back again; and I beg you to accept my thanks and the honest tribute of my admiration,

for the gallantry which you displayed on that occasion, and to which the success of the expedition is, in no slight degree, ascribable."

Normanton, after relating to the earl the events which had occurred during his sojourn at the convent, not omitting, by the way, his second rencontre with the fair Juana, informed him of his having, at length, succeeded in tracing the Protestant clergyman, of whom he had so long been in quest; and, after detailing the circumstances of their almost miraculous deliverance from the clutches of the Inquisition, mentioned that he had taken the liberty of claiming his lordship's protection for the persecuted divine.

"Captain Normanton," was the general's reply, "no man ever trusted to the Earl of Peterborough, and had cause to repent of his confidence; and, I may add, though not in the way of reproach, that, had you been a little more explicit with me, at our first interview after your examination before the council, you would have saved some risk to yourself, as well as to honest Dennis Mulrooney. With regard to the parson, I have no present means of procuring him a passage to an English port, whither, however, he shall be sent on the first opportunity; but, in order to his protection, in the interim, I will appoint him my chaplain, and let me see the man, be he the Grand Inquisitor himself, who will dare to lay a finger on him. As to your own affairs, my counsel to you is, accompany your reverend friend to England, or follow him with all despatch.

Estates are not so plentiful that you should lose the opportunity of establishing your rights; and although, from personal feeling, as well as with respect to the good of the service, I shall regret to part from you, I will not permit your permanent interests to be sacrificed to either consideration."

Normanton, whose scruples, as to quitting the military appointment which he had formerly held, had prevented him from taking possession of the family estate on the death of his elder brother, was unwilling to incur any further risk by delay, and therefore accepted the offer of the earl with many acknowledgments of the obligation.

Peterborough, after disclaiming any right to the other's gratitude, added, "I wish, however, that you could have persuaded the little Juana to change her name for a better, and accompany you to England. I think, if I had been a young man of your appearance and pretensions, and had possessed your opportunities, I would have scarcely left her to waste her days in a convent. But *chacun a son goût*. Farewell, my friend! I will see that the safety of my chaplain elect is cared for, although, I fear, it may be some days before I can offer him a passage to England."

Thus terminated the conference; and Normanton hastened to communicate to Abel Neale its successful result.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days after the interview recorded in the preceding chapter as having taken place between the Earl of Peterborough and Normanton, the latter was sitting alone in his quarters, when his servant entered, announcing the arrival of a person, who stated that he had a communication of importance to make, but refused to send in his name.

Our hero, albeit naturally of an unsuspicious disposition, deemed the mystery in which the message was involved a sufficient warrant for guarding against treachery, and accordingly placed his pistols within reach before he admitted the stranger, for such, on his entrance, he proved to be.

"To what circumstance," inquired Normanton, "am I indebted for the honour of a visit from one whom, if my memory fail me not, I have not had the good fortune to meet before?"

"Ere I answer your question," was the reply, "it behoves me to satisfy myself as to the identity of the party I address, and would, therefore, inquire if, some weeks since, you were not, for a brief space, in the house of a certain Donna Juana, a lady of Barcelona?"

"Without recognising your right to the information," said Normanton, "I will not compromise

the lady's reputation by withholding it. I had an interview with her about the period to which you refer."

"Then," pursued the querist, "you are the same person who was seen in conversation with her in the convent where she is now performing her novitiate?"

"Your inference," rejoined Normanton, "is entirely gratuitous; but, for the reason at which I have hinted, I do not hesitate to answer that I am that person."

"And," continued the other, "I am right in concluding that you are not altogether indifferent to the attractions of the young lady."

"Really, Sir," responded our hero, "your curiosity assumes so much the character of impertinence, that, before I gratify it, I must be better satisfied of your motives for making such extraordinary inquiries."

"Well," observed the stranger, "you will do as you please. If you refuse an answer to my question, there is an end to our conference."

"Which," said the officer, "you will please to recollect, was not of my seeking."

"Admitted," was the reply; "and yet, you would scarcely desire to terminate it so abruptly, if you knew the purport of my visit, which, on receiving an answer to my question, I will, without further parley, disclose to you."

"Well, then," responded Normanton, "if it be only to get rid of so pertinacious a querist, I care not if I own to you that your conclusion

is correct; and that aught which concerns the welfare of that young lady cannot be a matter of indifference to me."

"A somewhat periphrastic reply to a plain question, which might have been as easily resolved by a monosyllable as a sentence," observed the visitor.

"You are answered," rejoined our hero, impatiently.

"You are to know, then," continued the other, "that I am the lady's guardian and relative, Don Garcias—"

"What!" exclaimed Normanton, "that scoundrel whom my friend Neale—"

"No compliments, young gentleman," said the visitor, "I beseech you; but listen to me. The terms of her father's will were the talk of all Barcelona, and are, therefore, sufficiently notorious. In four days from this time she will have completed her eighteenth year, and if she be not then a bride with my sanction, the prior of San Josef will sweep one half of her fortune into the coffers of his convent, and the other into his own pocket. Now, there," added Garcias, throwing a written paper on the table, "is my consent, drawn up in form; and if, with that document, and the aid of a fair face and a smooth tongue, you cannot win a pretty wife and a handsome fortune, you deserve to live a beggar and a bachelor for ever."

"You will pardon me," exclaimed Normanton, when he had, in some degree, recovered from the

surprise which this extraordinary proposal excited, “ if I am somewhat distrustful of such an offer from one to whose favourable consideration I am not conscious of having the slightest title.”

“ Credit me, fair Sir,” was the reply, “ you owe it not to any favour you have with me, but to the circumstance of your being, if I am rightly advised, the only person who is likely to win the lady, and thus deprive the prior of his spoil.”

“ But what motive,” inquired Normanton, still incredulous, “ can you have for enriching me at his expense ? ”

“ Revenge ! ” was the answer; “ I hate the prior, who has betrayed and cheated me; and I would fain stab him in the only part in which he is vulnerable—his pocket. But, if you would profit by the golden opportunity, you have no time to lose. Remember, in four days.” And, with this admonition, he took his leave.

If it be asked how it happened that Garcias, who was a needy man, and not remarkable for modesty, did not, in making this overture, stipulate for a share of the wealth which he proposed to place in the other’s power, we answer, that we do not profess to divine the motives of all the characters we introduce; but, it is probable that the worthy Don’s forbearance, in this particular, arose from an apprehension, founded on a knowledge of the soldier’s character, that he would instantly spurn a proposal to which a condition, so inconsistent with his honour, was annexed.

Normanton, on the other hand, although he would certainly have preferred being indebted to a more amiable feeling, on the part of the Don, for the opportunity afforded to him, saw nothing, either in reason or conscience, to deter him from taking advantage of the quarrels of rogues, which are said to help honest men to their rights. It is, however, but justice to our hero to state, that he rejoiced in the possession of the document, merely on account of its giving him the means of removing the maiden's scruples on the score of her poverty ; for he deemed it more than problematical that, in the event of her marriage with a heretic, her property would be allowed to pass to her husband. Nor did Abel Neale, when consulted on the matter, urge any serious objections to the scheme ; on the contrary, it was easy to perceive, that he would willingly draw Juana, in whom he had taken great interest, within the pale of the Protestant Church ; and he knew no better auxiliary, in promoting so desirable an end, than her union with one who was far more likely to bring the lady over to his own religious profession than to conform to her's. Leave of absence from his regiment being necessary to the execution of his plan, Normanton waited upon the Earl of Peterborough for the purpose of obtaining it ; and, as he had never had reason to repent of his confidence in his lordship, he frankly informed him of the nature and object of his expedition, as well as of the extraordinary interview which had induced him to embark in it.

Now the romance of the British general's disposition was equally apparent in matters of love as in those of war; and, therefore, so far from throwing any impediment in the way of his *protegé*, he entered into his project with all the ardour of a youth of eighteen.

"Ah, Normanton!" he exclaimed, when the captain had finished his explanation, "you are a sly fellow, and have justified my opinion of your taste after all. I thought you were not a man to leave the bright-eyed Catalan to be buried in yonder mausoleum for the living—yelept a convent. But, by my generalship, you must up and be doing, or the prior of San Josef will be too many for you. Take an escort of dragoons—a troop, if you like—with a carriage and fitting attendants for the lady; and if you succeed in bringing her back to Valencia, you shall be married by my new chaplain, and I will give away the bride; whom, if I were a younger man and single, I should be infinitely more disposed to keep for myself. So, fare thee well, thou prince of critics, and mirror of soldiership! go, twine the myrtle with thy laurels!"

Normanton's mind was not altogether free from a suspicion of treachery on the part of Garcias, whom, independently of Neale's report of the Don's outrage on Juana, he knew to be a person of very questionable character, and, therefore, hesitated not to avail himself of the Earl of Peterborough's offer, by taking with him a very sufficient escort of his own troopers.

His journey to the convent, which, the reader will remember, was in the vicinity of Fuente de Higuera, was distinguished by little, except the extraordinary rapidity with which it was performed. On his arrival at the gate, he sent in his name, and requested the honour of a few minutes' conversation with the abbess, to whom he was accordingly introduced, in the same room in which his former interview, on the eve of the attack of the robbers, had taken place.

The old lady received him with a cordiality inspired by a remembrance of the services which his gallantry, in the affair of the banditti, had rendered to her establishment, as well as by the urbanity and grace of his manners, which won for him golden opinions from most persons with whom he conversed.

Normanton having, in a few words, explained to the abbess the object of his intrusion, produced the written authority of the young lady's guardian for the step he proposed to take, and concluded by an avowal of his love for Juana, and a request to be allowed to plead his cause in person.

The abbess, who, though herself secluded from the world, was not destitute of sympathy with those who lived in it, was sadly perplexed between her dread of compromising her duty and dignity as superior of the convent, and her desire to afford the captain a chance of overcoming the scruples of the young lady; who, she more than suspected, was by no means indifferent either to the handsome person or manly qualities of her suitor.

After a few moments' consideration, the abbess replied, "Donna Juana sought refuge within these walls from the persecution of her guardian's addresses; and, although I have been happy to afford her protection, I have no desire to be her gaoler. I received no charge with her, and, as she has not assumed the veil, I have no power to retain her, if she be minded to depart. Besides, if the document you have in your hand be not warrant sufficient for my acquiescence in your request, the argument of a troop of horse is too cogent to be resisted by a weak woman like myself."

"Nor is it one, be assured, dearest lady," rejoined Normanton, "to which I should, under any circumstances, resort. I only ask an interview; and if, being, by virtue of this paper, free to act as may seem good to her, she prefer the cloister to the home which I can offer her, I will neither urge her, nor trouble you more, on the subject."

"You speak fairly, Señor," was the reply of the abbess, "and, I honestly believe, mean as you speak. The conference which you require shall be granted to you; but the rules of the establishment require that it should take place in the presence of a lay sister."

Normanton bowed acquiescence in the condition, and was ushered into an apartment, appropriated to the visitors of the nuns, and divided in the middle by a trellis-work or light iron grating, behind which, after the lapse of a few minutes, Juana appeared. By a question which

he had previously addressed to the attendant, he had ascertained that she was deaf, a circumstance which had, doubtless, influenced the good-natured abbess in her selection of the lay sister for that particular duty.

Thus relieved from a restraint which the presence of a third party would otherwise have imposed, our hero advanced to the fair Catalan, and opened the conference by saying, "Donna Juana will probably excuse the liberty I have taken in venturing again into her presence, when she is told that an incident, as extraordinary as it was unexpected, has placed in my hands a document, the want of which she once urged as a reason for refusing a suit which I ventured to prefer."

He then delivered to her the written consent of Don Garcias to her union with Normanton, and detailed the circumstances under which he became possessed of it; adding, however, that he should not have exposed his motives to suspicion, by renewing his addresses on the strength of the concurrence of her guardian, had he not, in the evidence of Abel Neale, the means of establishing his claim to his matrimonial estate.

Juana, when she had recovered from the agitation which Normanton's visit and communication had produced, admitted frankly, though with a blush, which, while it heightened her beauty, gave additional interest to the avowal, that she was not indifferent to his merits, or the honour which he designed for her; but urged, in objection

to his suit, the disturbed state of the country, and the probability that the Spanish authorities would interfere to prevent, or annul, her marriage with a member of the reformed church.

Normanton met these objections by stating, that he had with him the means of her conveyance to Valencia, and a sufficient force to escort her thither in safety; and that, if she consented to become his bride, their union would be solemnized by the chaplain, and under the sanction, of the Earl of Peterborough, who had, moreover, promised him a passage to England, when the ceremony should have taken place. Not to dwell on the further difficulties which were started by the lady, or the ingenuity with which they were met by her lover, it may suffice to say that she finally consented.

Should any of my fair readers urge against the character of my heroine that her assent to the proposals of the young soldier was too readily given, I would beseech them to consider that her's was a choice, which admitted not of delay, between perpetual imprisonment and a union with one who, in addition to other claims to her regard, had given her the best possible proof of his devotion, by risking his life in her defence. That she did not, on her own account, advert to the difference in their religious professions, as an obstacle to their marriage, may be attributable to the fact of Abel Neale having, during his sojourn in Barcelona, overcome many of her prejudices against the Protestant church, and successfully

exposed to her many of the errors and absurdities of her own.

Normanton, having thus succeeded with the lovely Juana, drew off his troopers, in order that they might have the benefit of rest and refreshment after their rapid march; leaving the young lady to employ the interval in preparations for her journey to Valencia, in which she was to be accompanied by a discreet personage of her own sex, who had been brought from that city in the carriage for the purpose.

When the hour appointed for their departure was at hand, the captain left directions with his party to follow him to the convent, and proceeded thither to apprise Juana that all things were in readiness, and to take leave of the abbess, to whose kindness both he and his "ladye-love" were so much indebted.

While the carriage which was to convey the fair one was waiting at the gate, the troopers not having yet made their appearance, Normanton, his lovely prize, and the abbess, were together in the refectory. Their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the portress, announcing a visitor, who, following almost on her heels, made his appearance in the person of the prior of San Josef.

"I have arrived just in time," was his almost breathless exclamation.

"Yes, to take a farewell of my young charge, before her departure from these walls, for ever," returned the abbess, drily.

"Say, rather, to frustrate a nefarious conspiracy for taking a lamb from the bosom of our holy church and giving her to the arms of a heretic," rejoined the prior, who had gained intelligence of the measure to which Garcias had resorted to gratify his revenge.

"Conspiracy?" echoed the abbess; "really, most reverend prior, you have the advantage of us. Of what nature may be this notable plot, to which you are pleased, so gratuitously, to assume our privity?"

"One," replied the prior, "in which I blush to see one of your rank in the church a party."

Now, as one of the sex denominated the "tender," as tender they assuredly are in all matters affecting their authority, the abbess, whatever might be her respect for the office of the prior, was by no means disposed to acknowledge his priority in her own house, and therefore answered, "I pray you, keep your blushes for your own backslidings, and you will have few to spare on the sins of your neighbours."

"Well, then," pursued the prior, "I put it to you, in plain terms, whether, as the superior of this convent, you are not betraying the trust reposed in you by the church, in consenting to the abduction of yonder maiden from its sanctuary?"

"Content you," responded the abbess, "with the affairs of your own community; when I need your counsel in the management of mine, I will ask it. In the mean time, as your language

assumes a tone to which I am not accustomed, the sooner our interview is at an end the better."

As she spoke, she made a low courtesy to his Reverence, who replied, "I will relieve you of my presence, as well as of your charge, of which you have proved yourself so little worthy. *Señora*," he added, addressing himself to Juana, "your mule is ready."

"I fear," observed Normanton, interposing for the first time, "however highly the young lady may appreciate the honour of your company, her present engagements will scarcely admit of her profiting by your offer."

"Your consent," returned the ecclesiastic, with an emphasis on the pronoun, "is as little necessary to my purpose, as your resistance to it would be availing; unless, indeed, you prove an overmatch for six stout and well-armed attendants, whom I brought with me as a protection by the way."

"Without questioning their prowess for a moment," replied the captain, "I would counsel them to choose some fitter opportunity of proving it, if they have any respect for their bones."

"You, doubtless, intending to enact the Knight of La Mancha on the occasion," remarked the prior, with a sneer.

"You would do well to profit by my advice, instead of speculating on my intentions," was Normanton's deliberate reply; "for, I say again, you will find the experiment none of the safest; unless," he added, pointing through the window

to the party of troopers who, at that moment, came in view, "you can secure the neutrality of those gentlemen on the occasion."

The countenance of the prior, who had imagined that the game was in his own hands, fell at the sight of the escort; while, turning to the abbess, he exclaimed, "For this day's work, you shall be summoned before a tribunal, where a fearful reckoning will await you."

"And where," retorted the lady, "I do not fear to meet you; but, at the same time, I warn you that, if you stir any more in this affair, I will expose, as I have the means of doing, not only to that tribunal but to the world, the nefarious designs of you and your accomplice—nay, start not, I speak advisedly—upon the inheritance of her who had so nearly become your victim."

The prior, foiled at all points, was preparing to quit the apartment, when, addressing himself to Normanton, he said, "I will to your master, the Earl of Peterborough, who, if I judge him rightly, will scarcely sanction this outrage upon the religion and decency of the land."

"We travel the same way, then," replied the captain, with the most imperturbable good humour, "and you will, probably, condescend to accept of my escort as a security against certain independent gentlemen who infest the road to Valencia, and whom, even the valour of your retainers would scarcely prevent from indulging their curiosity as to the lining of your Reverence's purse."

The prior, however, who usually preferred indirect paths to straight ones, departed by a different route; while Normanton, after bidding adieu to the abbess, set out, with his party and interesting charge, for head-quarters.

The legend, whence this veritable history is derived, although dwelling with great particularity upon many of the facts it records, indulges us with very few details of the marriage of Normanton with Juana. It merely states that it took place immediately on their arrival at Valencia, in the presence of the Earl of Peterborough, who gave away the bride. Indeed, there are reasons for believing that the ceremony was performed as privately, and with as little parade, as possible.

For the sake of my fair readers, who are usually curious in such matters, I regret exceedingly that I am unable to describe

“ How smiled the bridegroom and how blush'd the bride;”

or to state whether the sleeves, worn by the lady on the occasion, were of the *gigot*, *demigigot*, or *séduisante* pattern.

Leaving these subjects, therefore, involved in the uncertainty in which I found them, I must shift the scene, and request my readers to accompany me to “ merrie England;” on the southern coast of which, and within about three miles of the sea, rose a spacious, and somewhat antiquated, mansion, in the centre of an extensive

and well-wooded park. A number of cottages, with out-buildings, which were scattered around, indicated that the circumjacent land was divided into small farms, which, to the author's knowledge, as well as to his regret, have since merged into a few large ones; in conformity to a system which is fast obliterating that honest, useful, and therefore respectable class of men, the yeomanry of England.

The possessor of that mansion was in an apartment commanding a view of the sea, over which he occasionally cast his eye, as the symptoms of a tempest became every moment more unequivocal. It was Gervase Normanton; and, if a judgment might be formed from the gloom which overhung his brow, his ill-gotten property had added little to his happiness. The truth is, that he was suffering the penalties which, even in this world, are inseparable from crime,—the contumely of all good men, and the ceaseless upbraiding of conscience, that vicegerent of God in the human heart, whose still small voice the loudest revelry cannot drown.

He was, at that moment, in the most intolerable companionship—that of his own thoughts; and the distant muttering of the rising tempest produced in his bosom a nervous excitement, which increased with the elemental war without. Nor were these feelings of undefinable dread in any degree mitigated by the obtruding remembrance of those days of comparative innocence, when he could look out calmly upon the storm,

unhaunted by the fear that the supereminence of his crimes would draw down the avenging thunderbolt upon his head !

The gloom in which the heavens were enveloped became, on a sudden, deeper, and, as he turned from the window, a vivid flash illuminated the apartment, and displayed to him the portrait of his late brother Everard, whose countenance, to the excited fancy of Gervase, wore an upbraiding and vindictive frown. Unable longer to endure this state of mind, under the aggravations of darkness and solitude, he rushed into an adjoining room for the means of kindling his lamp; and, having placed it a-light on the table, was proceeding to summon a domestic, when, for the first time, and to his inconceivable dismay, he discovered that he was not alone ! An aged and grey-headed man was standing erect in the middle of the apartment, in whom, changed as were his features by time and travel, he had no difficulty in recognising Abel Neale.

“ Gervase Normanton,” said the old man, in a solemn tone, “ what dost thou in another’s house ? ”

“ Has the grave given up its dead to augment the horrors of this dreadful hour ? ” returned Gervase, whose superstitious fears were confirmed by the pallidness of his visitor’s cheek, which was once fresh with the glow of health.

“ I am here,” was the reply, “ in the flesh. The story of thy crime hath reached me in distant lands, and I come—not to beg that justice as a boon which, thou well knowest, a word from my

lips will ensure—but to warn thee to ‘flee from the wrath to come’—from the vengeance of that God whose voice is, even now, speaking in the storm that is raging above thee.”

Gervase, who, in the arrival of Neale, saw the loss of the prize for which he had bartered his peace on earth and his hopes of heaven, had, during the address of the divine, sunk down into a chair, the arms of which he grasped convulsively, while the workings of his haggard features betrayed the agitation of his mind. At length he started up, and seizing the other’s hand, he exclaimed, “O, Abel Neale, Abel Neale, have pity upon a conscience-stricken despairing wretch, whom you once called friend!”

“Call not,” was the rejoinder, “upon a frail and sinful man for mercy, but humble thyself before the Lord, even as did Ahab in the matter of Naboth, the Jezreelite, and, it may be, He will not cut thee off in thy sins. Thy good name, once thy treasured jewel, is gone beyond recall, and even the merit of restitution, which yesterday had been thine, is denied thee. Yet, remember, there is One who died to purchase redemption for the lost, and pardon for the chief of sinners. Seek Him, then, early and earnestly; seek Him in repentance—seek Him in prayer; and thou hast the warrant of His own blessed book that he will ‘in no wise cast thee out.’”

“But—Henry Normanton—” said Gervase, hesitatingly; as if anxious to know how his nephew was likely to deal with him.

"He, whom thou hast injured," continued Neale, "will not reckon with thee for what is past, but will rather, if thou needest them, supply thee with the means of seeking that retirement to which the voice of thy fellow-men condemn thee."

Without ascribing or denying to Gervase Normanton more worthy motives, the conviction that the evidence of the divine would set aside his claim to the estate, and that to dispute the point, in a court of law, would only expose him to greater obloquy, was sufficient to influence him in resigning it to its rightful owner.

In about a week after the occurrence of the interview which we have just described, on a calm and lovely evening, a travelling carriage was observed, proceeding slowly through Normanton Park; and, on its drawing up at the door of the mansion, our hero stepped out, and, handing forth his lovely bride, welcomed her to the hall of his fathers, amid the acclamations of his tenantry, who, previously apprized of his coming, had assembled on the occasion.

It may, probably, be requisite to explain, that Normanton, Juana, and Abel Neale, had embarked from Spain, a few hours after the marriage; and that, on their arrival in England, the divine had offered to go in person to Gervase, and, by convincing him of the futility of resistance, save him from the exposure which must necessarily have awaited him in a court of law.

Neale, as we have shewn, not only succeeded in this, but took advantage of the circumstances

and frame of mind in which he found the usurping possessor of the estate, to attempt that which was, in all probability, the primary object of his visit, namely, the reclamation of the offender. And, it would seem, that the worthy divine was made the honoured instrument of bringing a lost sheep to his Master's fold, since we learn that Gervase died, in the retirement which his nephew had provided for him, after exhibiting, during a series of years, the fruits of "a repentance not to be repented of."

As Normanton had anticipated, the fortune of his Spanish bride, under the circumstances of her marriage, was not recovered; all that the interest of the Earl of Peterborough could obtain for them, was permission to dispose of it to any religious establishment in Spain which they might select; and, accordingly, they, without hesitation, nominated the convent in which Juana had taken refuge from the persecutions of her guardian; well knowing that they could not gratify the worthy abbess more highly than by augmenting her means of doing good.

Of the subordinate characters in our narrative, I can only gather, that Barney and Terry Flinn were promoted; the former to the rank of sergeant, and the latter to that of corporal, and that each received, annually, during his lifetime, a substantial token of Normanton's gratitude. Dennis Mulrooney, in reward of his general good conduct, and some particular act of gallantry, was preferred, by the Earl of Peterborough, to a

commission ; and, when he retired from the service, was a frequent and honoured guest at Normanton House.

Don Garcias, it appears, escaped from the meditated vengeance of the prior, by embarking for the new world, on a speculation in which, as he had nothing to lose, the chances were manifestly in his favour.

It may be satisfactory to state, that Juana became a proselyte to the religion of her husband, as had been anticipated by Abel Neale, through whose exhortation, under God's blessing, she, denying all other intercession, had long since been led to acknowledge one Mediator, and that His blood alone, and not the wealth of worlds expended in masses and oblations, can wash the soul from the pollution of its sins.

Of the divine himself, we learn, that he was settled in a small living, in the gift of Henry Normanton, and in the vicinity of the park, where, after many years of usefulness, he closed his earthly pilgrimage, with the well-earned reputation of an honest and active parish priest.

Should the fact of our hero and the "Novice" having "married in haste" suggest, in the mind of the reader, the inquiry if they "repented at leisure," it is answered, that they had the best security against that contingency in their mutual esteem, which is the oil that feeds the lamp of love, and without which, though the flame may burn brightly for a season, it will assuredly perish long before the lustre of the bright eye that lit it up.

**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
AN UGLY MAN.**



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN UGLY MAN.

I WAS sent into the world with the usual complement of limbs, and have no reason to quarrel with their proportions. I do not squint, nor am I hunch-backed, but am, nevertheless—there is no disguising it—an extraordinarily ugly man. So far, however, from taking this freak of Nature in dudgeon, I am eternally her debtor for it, and was very early made acquainted with its advantages.

My elder brother, with my father's estate in prospect, had a fair allowance of my mother's beauty in possession, and was petted accordingly. Never was any child so great a martyr to maternal solicitude as he! He was not allowed to play in the sun, lest it should spoil his complexion, nor in the wind, lest it should injure his eyes; but, as my eyes and complexion were deemed either weather-proof or not worth

preserving, I was permitted to wander, at my pleasure, in sunshine and shade, through field and forest.

There was rarely but one day in six on which it was considered prudent for my brother to take the air, and, consequently, I had the pleasure of riding his pony on the other five. In addition to these positive advantages, I enjoyed a negative one of an exemption from being lugged, on every festive occasion, before a host of people, after dinner, whose faces I never saw before, or cared to see, and paying an extravagant price for a thimbleful of wine by drinking the health of every one present six times over.

At school, it was never my misfortune to be dragged from the play-ground into the parlour, to spout "*My name is Norval*" to my master's visitors; and, as my bluff countenance and intractable looks were, happily, deemed disqualifications for a hero or a heroine, I was preserved from studying a part for our half-yearly theatricals, at the expense of the previous three months' play-hours. Once, indeed, I was compelled to undertake the part of a villain in a melo-drama; but, although I played it as villainously as could be desired, I was never called upon for a second exhibition of my histrionic powers.

When I relinquished my studies, it behoved me, as a younger son, to fix upon some means of making my way in the world. Had I started as a professor of drawing or music, I should infallibly have obtained half the female pupils in

town, since my immitigable ugliness would have afforded the best possible security to a parent against his daughter's elopement with her preceptor. I was not, however, qualified for an instructor in either of those accomplishments, my drawings being principally in pen and ink; and, as my father was the only person who condescended to *accept* my performances in that line, my practice was too limited to insure the requisite proficiency in the art; while in music I made but one experiment, which was on the flute, when, happening to catch, in a mirror, a glance of the contortions produced upon my countenance by the attempt, the effect was so irresistibly comic that I could never blow a note afterwards.

The professions of law, physic, divinity, and arms, were before me. With regard to the first, it was suggested that a prepossessing exterior was essential to the counteraction of the prevailing prejudice against an attorney; as a physician, it was conceived, I should be more likely to scare the patient than the disease; while, as a chaplain, I was far too ugly to be endured as a side-dish at a patron's table; and, to say the truth, I had some misgivings as to the prospect of getting a good living being a sufficient motive for entering the church. The conclusion, therefore, to which I at last arrived, was that I was too ugly for any other purpose than to be shot at; and then came the choice between the navy and army. A naval life involved the certainty of a six years' apprenticeship, pease-soup, salt junk, and weevilly

biscuit, with the probability of being mast-headed once in four-and-twenty hours, at the caprice of a lieutenant who might happen to covet the reputation of being a "smart officer." The army, on the other hand, was not without its drawbacks, inasmuch as it involved the necessity of living like a gentleman on five-and-sixpence a day; but then the distinctions of the parade were merged in the equality of the mess-table, where an ensign has the glorious privilege of being assisted to a penny-worth of greens from a dish of silver, and drinking as many *thirds* of wine as he can afford to pay for. To the army, then, my choice pointed, and being, accordingly, gazetted to an ensigncy in the thirty —, I received orders to join my regiment in the Peninsula.

The sensations I experienced at the onset of the first engagement in which I took a share, I do not feel called upon to explain to the reader; let it suffice him to be informed that, although I cannot lay claim to any prodigies of valour, I was allowed to have acquitted myself very creditably for a Johnny Newcome. It was my fortune to witness many a "stricken field" without getting a scratch. At the battle of Vittoria, however, during a charge, I received a wound from a musket-ball, which passed through the fleshy part of my arm, near the shoulder, and put me *hors de combat*. I was accordingly ordered to the rear for the purpose of obtaining the assistance of a surgeon; but, on making my way thither, I was unexpectedly encountered by

a French officer of cavalry, who seemed disposed to save me any further trouble, by pistolling me on the spot. I looked up in his face, and absolutely forgot the imminence of my peril in the contemplation of his visage, which, always excepting my own, was the ugliest I had ever beheld. He appeared equally struck with the *contour* of mine; and being, doubtless, unwilling to spoil the pair, and thus deprive himself of the pleasure of saying that he was not the plainest man in creation, he returned his weapon to his holster, and, exclaiming “*Si je le tuais, la race des laids serait bientôt éteinte,*” galloped off to another part of the field.

The generous Frenchman was celebrated, throughout both armies, not less for the originality of his countenance than the gallantry of his conduct; and, having succeeded in ascertaining his name, I availed myself of an opportunity, which shortly afterwards occurred, of acknowledging my obligation, by sending him a few bottles of rum, with the compliments of the ugliest man in the British camp; by which designation I felt convinced he would have no difficulty in guessing the individual from whom the present proceeded.

There was, in my regiment, an officer with whom I had some previous acquaintance, which, during our first campaign, grew into an intimacy, and we became, at last, sworn friends. Philip Stanley was young and handsome, of a daring spirit, and, moreover, blest with a romantic

temperament, which was eternally leading him into scrapes and difficulties. He had, it seemed, when out on a reconnoitring party, caught a glimpse of a damsel, at the casement of a castellated building in the neighbourhood of the camp; and judging, from the pensive style of her beauty, that she must necessarily be unhappy, had the vanity to think that he was born to console her. Accordingly, he never rested until, after a variety of stratagems, he succeeded in obtaining an interview; which he did by scaling the garden wall, when he flung himself at her feet, and declared himself the most wretched of men and the most constant of lovers.

The lady was astonished at his audacity, and marvellously smitten with his handsome English face, and splendid uniform: of course, she bade him quit her presence, and never presume to appear in it again. Whether, from his imperfect knowledge of Spanish, he misunderstood the latter part of her injunction, or, becoming afterwards sensible of the heinousness of his offence, was anxious to exhibit his penitence, I know not, but certain it is, that he was in the self-same spot and presence before he was a week older.

These stolen interviews, which, in justice to the lady's reputation, be it remembered, always took place in the presence of Teresa, her waiting-maid, were frequently repeated; and Stanley gathered, in the course of them, that the young lady was rich, but in the guardianship of a distant relative, the owner of the castle, who was

anxious, by a nearer connexion, to repair, with her wealth, his own dilapidated fortunes. Philip ascertained, also, that the hidalgo was not remarkable for his youth or personal attractions, nor likely to be, in any degree, scrupulous as to the means of ridding himself of a rival in the lady's affections. She added, that her guardian was, at that time, absent, as it was his wont to be for many days together, but that she was in hourly expectation of his return.

Stanley, upon this hint, made the most of his time; and, on one occasion, I was silly enough, at his urgent request, to accompany him in his visit, in order, as he alleged, that I might judge of the correctness of his taste. I was, accordingly, introduced, and very graciously received by the lady, to whom I was in the middle of the longest and most gallant speech I had ever made in my life, when Teresa, whose attention had been drawn towards the castle by some unwonted bustle, came flying back to us, in great terror, with the intelligence that the hidalgo had returned, with his retinue, and that, consequently, it behoved us to consult our safety by an immediate retreat. Stanley mounted the ladder, which was of rope, first, gained the top of the wall, and let himself down on the other side, when I prepared to follow him; but, unfortunately, before I had ascended half way, the apparatus broke, and I was precipitated into a rose-bush, out of which I scrambled with my face and hands literally studded with thorns, and streaming with blood.

The approach of footsteps precluded any attempt at reuniting the ladder, and left me no alternative but to trust to the guidance of Teresa, who conducted me through a covered avenue to a low door leading into a chapel, connected with the castle, where she left me, with injunctions to remain quiet until I saw her again.

The command was, however, more easily given than obeyed; since, independently of the jeopardy in which my life would be placed in the event of my being discovered by the *hidalgo*, my absence from my regiment, on the following morning, would be attended by consequences scarcely less to be dreaded than death itself. The chapel was imperfectly illuminated by a small lamp, placed before an image of the Virgin, and the light, falling dimly upon the massive pillars and grim effigies on the circumjacent tombs, tended rather to increase than mitigate the horrors of the place.

I waited anxiously for the arrival of Teresa until nearly midnight, when, instead of the light step of my fair friend, the heavy clank of an armed heel proclaimed the approach of a less welcome visitor. The door which communicated with the castle was then opened by one, in whose gaunt figure and ferocious countenance I immediately recognised a man, who, in the character of a *guerilla* chief, was distinguished, not more for the daring as well as predatory nature of his exploits, than for the atrocious cruelties by which they had been accompanied.

Armed to the teeth, Gomez advanced slowly up the aisle, passing me so closely that his cloak brushed the column behind which I was concealed. In shifting my position, so as to keep the pillar between us, my sword came in contact with the marble, producing a slight noise; on which he paused, raised and depressed his lamp, listened, and looked suspiciously around, but, at length, passed on; and, the next moment, I beheld, kneeling at the foot of the Virgin, apparently in the deepest devotion, a man, whose hand had been steeped in blood, and was ready to shed it again upon the first occasion on which his interest or his passions prompted the libation.

With the conviction that a rencontre with Gomez, even should I prove an over-match for him, would ensure my destruction, inasmuch as the noise of the conflict would bring his retainers upon me in a body, I awaited the issue in breathless anxiety. It was, therefore, with an indescribable feeling of relief that I observed him rise from his knees, and slowly retrace his steps, closing the door after him as he quitted the chapel.

The protracted absence of Teresa, however, revived my apprehensions, and I was meditating a desperate attempt at escape, independently of her assistance, when the door was slowly opened, and a figure, completely enveloped in a grey mantle, advanced cautiously towards me. It was not until I heard the low-breathed "Hist!" of my visitor, that I recognised the pretty waiting-

maid, and came forth from my place of concealment.

"Bless your stars, Señor," she said, "that you have not the handsome face of your friend upon your shoulders, or your life would not be worth an hour's purchase."

"What mean you, my pretty maid?" I inquired.

"Nay," she replied, "do not pay me a compliment which I cannot return in kind; but listen to me. You must know there is a tradition that a grim old warrior, who was murdered many years ago, and lies buried beneath us, is given to walk the chapel at night, in a grey mantle. Now, as the features of the worthy knight were not remarkable for their beauty, and as your's, craving your pardon, Señor, are somewhat of the homeliest, I think that, with the addition of this mantle, and the scarifications of the rose-bush fresh on your visage, you might pass, in a crowd, for the spirit of the chapel. The hidalgo's retainers are assembled in the hall, listening to one of the old steward's ghost stories, and, consequently, well prepared for your appearance. Follow me closely, and when I scream out, do you stalk into the hall, and, with as much expedition as may consist with your ghostly dignity, make your way to the door; when you must take to your heels, and clear the gate, beyond which you will find your friend and a horse waiting for you."

Adopting the advice of my fair counsellor, I followed her to the entrance of the hall, when she

rushed in, and flinging down her lamp, with a scream of terror, exclaimed, "The spirit of the chapel!—save me—save me!" As I stalked after her, the party made way for me on all sides, in the greatest consternation. One stout fellow, however, appeared inclined to dispute my passage, and, as I dared not peril my spiritual reputation in an encounter with him, I should have been in an awkward dilemma, had not Teresa rushed to him, as if for protection, and clung to him so closely that he was unable to arrest my progress. Before the rest of the group had recovered from their alarm, I had cleared the castle gate, and rejoined my friend, when we galloped towards the British camp, and arrived just in time to save our credit.

Shortly after this adventure, our friend, the hidalgo, fell into the hands of a party of French soldiers, who, in requital of certain aggressions not recognized by the laws of war, shot him without ceremony. Philip Stanley no sooner heard of this event, and of the consequent unprotected situation of his *inamorata*, than he volunteered his services, and, finally, shipped off his treasure to England, consigned to the care of his sister, until the termination of the war should enable him to follow and claim her hand.

Peace came at last; and, on the bustle and circumstance of war, followed the monotony of country-quarters, and, in due succession, the more unendurable monotony of half-pay. My brother, who, by the death of my father, had

succeeded to the family estate, on hearing of my retirement, invited me to take up my quarters with him. It was kindly intended, and I expressed my gratitude accordingly. To be, however, a whipper-in of whippers-in, to keep in order fowling-pieces and fishing-rods, to teach children to ride and dogs to hunt, and to be included in the invitations only of the second-rate gentry in the neighbourhood, did not exactly square with my notions of military dignity; and, accordingly, I preferred half-pay and freedom to luxury and dependence.

I remained, for a time, in the metropolis, but soon grew weary of a town life; many of its pleasures were not to my taste, while others were beyond the compass of my means. It is true, I had good introductions, and might have figured away in the "first circles" for a season, and thereby earned the privilege of reflecting upon my folly, at full leisure, in the King's Bench; but, deeming the walls of that agreeable retreat likely to interfere with my prospects, which were circumscribed enough already, I resolved on gratifying a desire I had long entertained of visiting the "land o' cakes."

Accordingly, I shipped myself in a Leith packet, a mode of travelling which, while it consortied with my humour, was admirably suited to my finances. On my arrival at "Modern Athens," I delivered a few letters of introduction, with which, by the kindness of a friend, I had been provided, and of which, had I availed myself

to the full extent, I might have lived at free-quarters for a twelvemonth. But, whiskey-toddy, after the claret, did not agree with me, and I, therefore, strapped my knapsack on my back, and set out on a ramble to the Highlands. I was delighted by the wild scenery of that romantic country, and should have become more intimately acquainted with its attractions, but for an incident, the relation of which may not be uninteresting.

I had been sojourning, for a day or two, with a gentleman of some consequence in the district, who, with a view of gratifying a curiosity which he had heard me express, with regard to the manners of the ancient inhabitants, invited the chief of a clan, who kept up much of the state of his ancestors, and entertained a laudable contempt for the arts and refinements of modern life. He came, at the time appointed, in full costume, and with his "tail" on, that is, with a numerous retinue of his clansmen ; and, like many animals with tails, was not remarkable for the gentleness of his manners.

As an especial distinction, I was placed next to him at dinner, which passed off tolerably well ; but, when the glass began to circulate, the little ceremony, which he had at first observed, gradually wore off, and he became dogmatical and boisterous in the expression of his opinions. Although some of his remarks were not particularly grateful to the ears of the *Sassenach*, as he was pleased to designate me, I was adroit enough

to parry his thrusts, for some time, and thus avoided coming to an open rupture. At last, however, he required my assent to two propositions, namely, that the bagpipe was the most harmonious instrument in the world; and, secondly, that his piper, Sandy Mac—(I forget the barbarous adjunct) was the finest performer on it.

Now, with regard to the latter, as excellence appeared to consist in the power of producing the most hideous of all earthly sounds, I had no hesitation in admitting Sandy's superiority; but, as to the former proposition, I replied, that although, in battle, the bagpipe, like a toddy-ladle, was a spirit-stirring thing, there certainly were instruments to which, for my own particular delectation, I gave a preference.

This, however, did not satisfy him of the philibeg, who, with a preface of Gaelic oaths, which would have torn up the pavement of any other throat than a Highlander's, insisted on an unequivocal assent to his dogma.

My courtesy, which had been strained to the uttermost, here gave way, and I told him, flatly (or roundly, if the reader desire a choice of two opposite words meaning the same thing) that I would not dishonour myself by a lie for the best man that ever wore a kilt. Hereupon he instantly plucked out his dirk, but, before he could apply this pointed argument,

“With nothing at all in my hand but my fist,”

I anticipated the result of his evening's potation,

by laying him sprawling under the table, where, his head having struck against a leg of it, he remained without sense or motion.

Immediately repenting of an act which, though purely one of self-defence, appeared to have been attended by consequences to my opponent, not to be contemplated without horror, I hastened to raise him up, but, before I could accomplish it, an old Highlander, in the service of my host, seized me by the arm, and dragged me, through a side door in the apartment, into the open air; then giving me the consolatory assurance that there was not a man in the numerous retinue of the chief who would not consider it his duty to wash out the dishonour done to their lord in my heart's blood, he bade me run for my life, as nothing but speed of foot could save me.

At that moment, a yell from the clansmen, to which Sandy's bagpipe was perfect harmony, afforded a terrific confirmation of the warning I had received, and I darted off, down the ravine, with the speed of a chased deer. As my adviser had informed me, there was nothing left for me but flight, concealment being out of the question, for there was not wood enough in the whole glen to boil a camp kettle; while, to add to my difficulties, the moon was at the full, and there was not a cloud in the sky.

I never looked behind me but once, when the sight of my pursuers, and their broadswords flashing in the moonshine, increased my speed. Having reached a point of the road, at which an

intervening projection enabled me to alter my course without being observed, I quitted the beaten track, and made immediately for the bottom of the glen, or ravine, where I hoped still to continue my flight unperceived by the Highlanders, whose voices, to my great joy, I heard apparently in dispute as to the direction I had taken.

My worst apprehensions were, however, again excited by the sound of footsteps, which, every moment, became more distinct; while, unaccustomed to such violent exertion, I began to feel that I could not long maintain the pace at which I was travelling. At last, the discovery of a cottage, at the distance of about half a mile, inspired me with fresh courage, and I rushed forward in the hope of gaining it before the barbarians at my heels were near enough to observe my entrance. Having reached the desired spot, I knocked violently at the door, and, after the lapse of a few minutes, which appeared the longest in my life, a voice from within inquired my name, and what I wanted at that late hour.

To this I replied that I was flying for my life, and beseeched the inquirer to open the door, if he would not have me sacrificed on the spot. Another pause, though not so long as the first, ensued, and then the door was cautiously opened by a person armed with a stout cudgel; but who, to my great relief, did not wear a kilt, and had more the appearance of a Yorkshire farmer, or grazier, than a native of the Highlands.

In the cottage, besides himself, were a woman, who seemed to be his wife, and a blue-eyed rosy girl, of about seventeen, who might pass for their daughter. They were, apparently, on the point of retiring to bed ; the good man having already divested himself of his coat and waistcoat.

I briefly explained to them my situation, and appealed to their hospitality for protection, or rather for permission to conceal myself until my pursuers had passed by. The man exchanged glances with the females, and finding them, as the sex (bless them !) always are, on the side of humanity, he replied that he would do his best to save me. He accordingly proposed to stow me under some trusses of straw, in an out-house ; but his wife, with the facility of invention by which the ladies are characterized, suggested, that I should take refuge in their daughter's chamber ; and, being first suitably disguised, should pass as an invalid relative, in the event of the Highlanders penetrating into the sanctuary of a lady's apartment.

The husband, before giving his assent to the proposition, looked in my face, and reading therein an ample guarantee for the fair Jessy's discretion in the matter, he resigned me to her charge without scruple. The good-natured damsel, removing my hat, which she hid under a chest of drawers, supplied its place with a night-cap, whose amplitude of frill, however becoming it might be to her own pretty face, contributed little, I opine, to the amiability of mine ; and,

where fortified by the most elaborate fortifications, following to the right, I had not but on my present route, but a very poor chance of getting past a second battery. What was the result?

These abhorred such an exhibition, and so I began to run, while Harry was down in the saddle, with a full light horse, but, mounted to the saddle, Harry to his side, and on the right, a valiant horse, however, I had a hard pull, and I could expect every moment to be struck down by the hand of the Lord, but I passed the second of the batteries, and so I passed an instant of half a mile with the last battery of 200 paces.

In the interval, by the side of the road, there was a station, where where I was informed, there was a house of which was given to the road, and Harry mounted the horse, and I followed him, and a moment of a young lad, who was one of the child, fully mounted, and ready, and mounted, except that he had not, in all that time, a sufficient horse and rider, to pass the battery. The followers, however, were not given by their horses, to make a sufficient at the threshold.

My horse, however, grasping his nostrils, and holding with his muzzle in the hair of his mane, and in no very commanding manner, but with the pressing nature of his business, would not keep until the morning.



by J. M. Wright

Engraved by T. S. Egglehart

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN UGLY MAN.

London Printed Nov 1. 1832 by Jennings & Chaplin 62, Cheapside.

when enveloped in the folds of a capacious dimity wrapping-gown belonging to her mother, I doubt not but my *tout ensemble* would have scared any but a blood-thirsty Highlander out of his senses.

Thus adorned, and, as Shakspeare says, "boots and spurs and all," I leaped into the bed, while Jessy sat down in the window-seat, with a rush-light beside her, prepared to enact the part of nurse to her sick aunt, in the event of such an exhibition becoming necessary. I had scarcely stowed myself away between the sheets, when a thundering knock at the door of the cottage announced the arrival of the blood-hounds, and caused an increase of fifty per cent. in the rapidity of my pulse.

In the wainscot, by the side of the bed, there was a crevice, through which I was enabled to get a view of what was passing in the next apartment. My hostess opened the door, and, on the entrance of a young Highlander, a near relative of the chief, fully equipped with musket, targe, and broad-sword, dropped her candle on the floor, in affected terror and surprise at the apparition. His followers, amounting, as far as I could guess by their voices, to some half a score, remained at the threshold.

My host, however, grasping his cudgel, and holding up his candle in the face of the intruder, inquired, in no very conciliating tone, what might be the pressing nature of his business, that it would not keep until the morning.



by J.M. Wright.

Engraved by T.S. Englehardt.

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The young Highlander replied, that their chieftain had been murdered by a Sassenach, who, he had reasons for believing, had taken refuge in the cottage.

My worthy protector answered, that he knew nothing of any murderer, and desired that the unwelcome visitor would depart with his followers, and cease to disturb the peace of a decent family, at that unseasonable hour.

This evasion did not satisfy the young barbarian, who, calling in his "tail," expressed his intention of searching the house, which they proceeded to do in a very summary and unceremonious manner. They carried their investigation into every nook and corner of the house, except the apartment in which I was bestowed, and before the door of which my host placed himself, and remonstrated strongly with the party against their intruding into the chamber of the sick person.

The delicacy, however, which would not have stood in the way of their cutting my throat, was not likely to prevent them from violating the sanctuary of the damsel's bed-room, into which two or three of the party accordingly entered.

After searching every closet, and looking into every box and chest into which the four quarters of a gentleman of my dimensions could, by possibility, be stowed, they next approached the bed, and flung aside the curtains. I need not—indeed, I cannot—describe to the reader my sensations at that juncture, for, although not the sick person

I feigned to be, I verily believed myself at the point of death.

I had, however, sufficient presence of mind to avoid shrinking from the scrutiny to which I was subjected ; while, so completely lost was the text of my countenance, in the margin of frill with which my fair friend had invested it, that the Highlanders, whose powers of discrimination, owing to the depth of their potations, were probably none of the clearest, did not recognise, in the apparently bed-ridden invalid before them, the man for whose blood they were thirsting. It is possible, too, that their attention was, in no slight degree, distracted by the running-fire of vituperation with which Jessy assailed them during their search.

With feelings similar to those which must be experienced by a criminal when he receives a reprieve, I listened to the receding footsteps of my plaided enemies ; and, when I was assured by my generous host that they had left the house, to all appearance satisfied that it did not conceal the object of their search, I resigned my bed to the kind-hearted Jessy, with many thanks for the loan of it, and passed the remainder of the night, stretched by the fire-side, upon a sort of moveable oaken bench, with a back to it, termed, I believe, in some parts of the North, a *lang-settle*.

The excitement, however, to which I had been subjected, added to my uncertainty as to the fate of the chieftain, whose death from the blow I had given him would have embittered the

remainder of my life, effectually banished sleep from my eyes; and I watched with impatience for the return of day, which, I hoped, would put an end to my suspense. My host was, fortunately, an early riser, and, on my explaining to him the subject of my anxiety, he obligingly volunteered to ride over to the scene of the affray and ascertain the position of affairs.

He returned, in about an hour, accompanied by my late entertainer, who relieved my apprehensions by informing me that my antagonist, unfortunately for the peace of society, was as well as ever. My friend added, in reply to my apologies for my share in the disturbance, that, so far from disapproving of my conduct, he marvelled that I had borne with the impertinence of the barbarian so long. He concluded by stating that, although, by threatening to enforce a wadset, or mortgage, which he held over some property of the chief, he had prevailed upon him to forego his vows of revenge, he was by no means secure of the acquiescence of his retainers in the compact, and therefore advised me to quit the country with as much secrecy, and as little delay as possible. He followed up his recommendation by pressing upon me the loan of a horse, giving me the name of a person in whose care I might leave it, on my arrival at the first town where I could obtain a conveyance to Edinburgh.

I need not say that I concurred in the expediency of the measure, and accepted the offer of

his horse with many thanks. Before I departed I expressed my obligations to the worthy cottager, who, however, peremptorily refused to accept of a more substantial acknowledgment. The utmost I could effect in that way was to prevail on Jessy to accept a little trinket which was appended to my watch, as a slight token of my gratitude for their kind exertions in my behalf.

Being desirous to know how far I was indebted to my ugliness for my safety, on the late occasion, I took the opportunity afforded by her father attending me to my horse, to sound him on the subject. On being closely pressed, he acknowledged that, had I been better favoured in the way of personal beauty, he should have adhered to his own proposition of hiding me beneath the straw in an out-house, in which case I should assuredly have fallen a sacrifice to the vengeance of the Highlanders, who probed every truss of it with their broadswords.

On my arrival in Edinburgh, I found a letter from my friend and brother officer, Philip Stanley, inviting me, in terms that scarcely admitted a refusal, to spend a month with him at his matrimonial estate, in which he was snugly settled, having some months since been married to the fair Spaniard. The invitation came very opportunely, and saved me a world of deliberation as to the manner in which I should dispose of myself for the rest of the autumn, which was drawing to a close.

On reaching my friend's, I found that there

were other visitors besides myself; and, among them, were two exquisites and a London merchant. Of the former, one was a man of fortune, who, as I have somewhere heard or read of one of his class, "had nothing to do, and he did it," and was altogether the most exclusive piece of inanity it has ever been my lot to encounter.

The other was a subordinate member of the *corps diplomatique*, and a poet, who had been rejected as a contributor to half the periodicals in town, notwithstanding his having, in some instances, reversed the order of things, and offered a handsome sum per sheet for the insertion of his articles.* But Fate and the editors were against him; and the lucubrations with which he had fondly hoped to edify the world, confined within the narrow channel of private life, deluged the albums of all his female acquaintance. It is related of him, that he once enclosed a copy of verses, instead of a despatch, to our ambassador at Constantinople, who nearly fell a victim to the narcotic effects of the infliction.

With the character of a British merchant we are accustomed to associate ideas of sterling worth and liberality, of which that class of men has furnished splendid examples from the days of Gresham to our own; but he, with whom we

* This fact, extraordinary as it may appear, is not without parallel. The author remembers to have seen a letter to the Editor of a leading Annual, returning a previously rejected article, with a tender of five guineas for its insertion.

have now to deal, was a degenerate scion of an honourable stock. He was a young man, and, thanks to the industry and successful enterprise of his father, a wealthy one. A precisian in his dress, which savoured of the debateable land between *ton* and trade, frigid and supercilious in his manner, and mistaking stiffness for dignity, he presented a strange, and yet uninteresting anomaly ; and, being the most solemn, was the most unendurable coxcomb of the three.

Among the guests of the other sex was a lovely bright-eyed blooming creature, with the form of a sylph and the face of an angel, but whose retiring and unobtrusive manners impressed me with an idea, which an odd combination of circumstances, not essential to our narrative, tended to confirm, that she was a relative, dependent on the bounty of my munificent friend. Possessed with this opinion, I showed her more attention than I should otherwise have paid her, and was charmed by the indications of sound sense and right feeling which her conversation afforded.

Our host, in the true spirit of hospitality, having provided a variety of amusements for his guests, imposed no restraint upon their election, stipulating only for their assembling at dinner, which, thanks to good air and exercise, rarely waited for any of us. There were horses for those who chose to ride, and the gamekeeper and his assistants at the service of such as were inclined to shoot or fish ; while a refuge, in wet

weather, was provided in the billiard-room and the library. The latter would seem to have been the natural retreat of the poet; who, however, preferred indulging his meditations *al fresco*, and might be seen in the most conspicuous parts of the grounds, *attitudinizing*, with the envelope of a letter in one hand, and a Mordan's pencil in the other. It is much to be regretted that he had not the faculty of transferring the "ever-pointed" property of his pencil to his epigrams, which were chiefly remarkable for not having any point at all.

Our breakfast was a desultory sort of meal, being, in consequence of the late hour at which some of the guests completed their morning toilet, usually protracted until nearly noon. Miss Pemberton was always first at the table; and such is the force of example, that, albeit not previously famed for early rising, I generally found my way into the room shortly after she was seated.

The admiration with which her personal attractions and lady-like deportment had, at first sight, inspired me, became every day heightened, as her intellectual graces and amiable disposition were developed by a more intimate acquaintance. Her accomplishments were rather elicited by others than displayed by herself; and when her musical talents, which were of a high order, were put in requisition, the manner of her compliance shewed that she was anxious rather to afford pleasure to others than to secure applause to herself.

Her graphic powers were brought into play upon the same principle. She had been employed in making some sketches of the surrounding scenery, which she presented to Mrs. Stanley; and the gratification she derived from the assurance that she had pleased her friend, was in no degree enhanced by the admiration which her performances elicited from others.

Her sensibility was, in the highest degree, acute and refined, although she did not exemplify it by shrieking at the sight of a frog, or fainting at the scratching of a mouse. Cowardice, albeit excusable, and, some will maintain, natural in a woman, is not, I contend, essential to her delicacy; and Blanche Pemberton possessed a strength of mind—a moral, and, I might add, a personal courage, which imparted a dignity to her manner, without detracting from its feminine characteristics.

An incident, during my stay at Stanley's, strikingly illustrated her presence of mind upon a trying occasion. We were returning from an excursion up a river in the neighbourhood, and had nearly arrived at the place of disembarkation, when our friend, the diplomatist, flinging himself back in an ecstasy of admiration at what he termed the Italian beauty of the evening, rolled over the gunwale of the boat into the stream. We had four ladies on board, three of whom shrieked in concert. Miss Pemberton's concern for the accident was not less intense than that of the other females; but, happily for the man of

rhymes, it displayed itself in a different form. She thrust out the cane of her parasol to him, as he rose a second time to the surface, and thus, notwithstanding he had a copy of his own verses in his pocket, kept his head above water until he was hauled into the boat—whether by the hair of his head, or his moustaches, I cannot, at this distance of time, call to mind.

Another characteristic of this amiable being was the charitable indulgence which she exhibited towards the failings of others, and her endurance of their effects upon herself. Often have I seen her condemned to listen to the stilted prosings of the poet, to the vapid inanities of his brother exquisite, or to the frigid pomposity of the man of bales and puncheons, without exhibiting aught of that impatience and disgust which a worse regulated mind than her's could not but have betrayed. Her only feeling towards them was that of pity, which never degenerated into contempt.

And yet were all these sterling qualities of mind and heart united to a buoyancy of spirits, and a playfulness of fancy, that gave a life and a charm to the society in which she moved.

It happened, one day, that I had gone out on a shooting excursion alone, and having bagged as much game as I could conveniently carry, I was returning, somewhat earlier than was my custom, by an unfrequented path, to my friend's mansion. As I was passing by a little cottage, situated on the skirts of a wood, whence I had

just emerged, a voice, which sounded familiar to me, aroused my attention.

The earnest tones of the speaker induced me to look in at the window whence it proceeded, when I beheld a young female, apparently in the last stage of consumption, reclining upon a kind of couch. A feeling, worthier, I trust, than curiosity, fixed me to the spot. It was a beautiful evening in the autumn, and the rays of the setting sun, streaming through the opposite window of the apartment, irradiated another countenance, which, till then, I had never deemed so lovely: it was that of Blanche Pemberton, who, unconscious of the glance of any eyes but those of God and the cottage maiden, was kneeling by the couch, in the exercise of that devotion, the genuineness of which is best attested by its independence of the world's applause.

The words of her petition were simple, as is ever the language of the heart; its delivery was fervent and impressive, and its matter peculiarly adapted to the solemn occasion on which it was uttered.

It was not until the voice of the suppliant had ceased that I could tear myself from the scene. I departed, if not a better, a wiser man; since the basis of that superstructure of moral beauty, which had at once charmed and astonished me, was laid bare; and in the piety, which, like its brightest attribute, "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not its own," I saw the source of those virtues which adorned her.

But, although my wonder ceased, my admiration of her character, from that hour, became more intense, and she thenceforth appeared, in my eyes, invested with a dignity and sacredness with which my imagination, in its wildest soarings, had never before clothed any human being.

I was at some distance from her at the dinner table ; but I met her, in the drawing-room, at night. Her manner was somewhat subdued, I thought ; but she was cheerful, as was her wont. She was not one of that class of gloomy pietists, who despise the elegant arts of life, but, knowing them to be innocent in themselves, she cultivated them for the pleasure which they afforded to her friends. When, therefore, she was solicited to sing, she complied with a readiness, the motive of which was not to be mistaken ; and seating herself at the harp, which she touched with inimitable delicacy and sweetness, sang one of those ballads, whose simplicity constitutes their charm, with which our language abounds. I had heard more scientific singers, whose music delighted the ear, but never one whose melody so directly reached the heart. The best proof of its effect upon her hearers may be adduced in the fact that, for several seconds after the strain had ceased, they were silent. The melody seemed, even then, to be floating in the air, and the group who surrounded her appeared unwilling to destroy the illusion by their applause.

I will not deny that, when I retired to my chamber for the night, I began to estimate the

capabilities of a captain's half-pay with reference to "love in a cottage;" but my presumptuous hopes were checked the next instant—not by a glimpse in a mirror of my countenance, arrayed as it was in that most admirable of all inventions for correcting personal vanity, a man's night-cap, but by the conviction that I was utterly unworthy of so amiable a being.

I found refuge from those discouraging reflections in sleep, from which, however, about two o'clock, I was awakened by a difficulty in breathing, and soon discovered, from unequivocal symptoms, that the mansion was on fire. Expedition,

"In sacrificing to the Graces,
By putting on his clothes,"

is one of the accomplishments which a man picks up in a camp, and, accordingly, I was soon dressed; when tearing down the bell-ropes, which were of substantial materials, I tied them together, and, having attached one end to the bed-post, contrived to lower myself to such a depth from the window that, my chamber being on the first-floor, I could drop upon the lawn without endangering my limbs.

I alighted in the midst of guests and domestics in every stage of the toilet, and found that their attention was absorbed by the perilous situation of Miss Pemberton, the staircase leading to whose chamber was already on fire; while the flames were bursting from the window of the next

apartment, divided from her's by only a thin wainscot.

A ladder had been raised to her window, but, as she did not obey the reiterated entreaties of her friends to avail herself of its means of escape, it was naturally conjectured that she had been overcome by fright, or the suffocating influence of the smoke. The question then arose as to who should mount the ladder. Stanley, ignorant of the young lady's danger, was engaged in the other wing of the building, endeavouring to allay the agitation of his wife, or he would have been the first to attempt the ascent.

The two exquisites, who were present, would readily have risked their lives in the exploit; but to peril a moustache or a pet curl was quite another affair, and required deliberation. I, however, with not a jot more courage, but with infinitely less at stake, seized a hatchet, ascended the ladder, and, forcing in the window-sash at a blow, precipitated myself into the room, just as the flames had burst through from the adjoining one. The poor girl was nearly dressed, but, overcome, probably, by the effects of the intense heat and the smoke, had sunk into a chair, almost insensible to what was passing around her, and utterly unable to assist herself in the dreadful emergency.

Catching up a plaid cloak, which was hanging upon a chair, I flung it over her head, in order to protect her auburn locks from the element that had carbonised my own, and, bearing her in my

arms, deposited her in the window-seat until I regained my footing on the ladder; on which I no sooner appeared, without the object of my solicitude, than a cry of horror, at the supposed failure of my attempt, arose from the party below.

Immediately, however, raising the fainting girl, I supported my lovely burthen with one arm, and steadyng myself with the other, I reached the lower round of the ladder just in time to crush the toe of the poet, who had taken heart of grace, and made one step towards the rescue of the lady.

I resigned not my charge, until I had bestowed her in the gardener's cottage, where I left her in good hands, and hastened back to the scene of the conflagration. The fire, thanks to Providence, was, by means of a good engine and the contiguity of the fish-pond, at last got under; one wing only of the building having fallen a sacrifice to its ravages. My friend, Stanley, instead of fruitlessly lamenting over the catastrophe, felicitated himself, like a good Christian as he was, that it was no worse.

Anxious for the dear creature, whom I had been the favoured instrument of rescuing from the most horrible of deaths, I walked down to the cottage, on the following morning, to inquire after her health, when I received for answer, that she was much better, and would see me. I was unprepared for and not a little discomfited by the message, and would willingly have postponed the

interview, until I could make my appearance before her in a somewhat better plight; for my head was singed as bald as a billiard-ball, and my whiskers were demolished to a hair. However, ladies' behests are not to be slighted, and accordingly, fresh from the hands of the most expeditious of all tonsors, the Fire-king, I was introduced into her presence.

She was sitting on a sofa, and looking paler than I had ever seen her before, but the absence of the rose discovered the lily which lay beneath it. She would have risen from her seat, but, taking her extended hand, I prevented her, and took my place in a chair by her side; when she said, "Captain —, I owe my life, under God, to your humanity and courage. I have only my poor thanks to offer you; but a moment's reflection on the importance of the service you have rendered me must convince you that they are sincere. Never—never shall I forget it."

Thrown off my guard by the warmth of feeling and frankness of manner thus exhibited towards me by one whom, until I had seen her in peril, I knew not that I loved so dearly, I replied, "To live in the memory of Miss Pemberton is a happiness, second only to that of possessing a place in her heart; a felicity for which I may not hope."

I hesitated; not daring, at the instant, to seek, in the expression of her countenance, the effect of the avowal into which I had been betrayed. Encouraged, however, by her allowing me to

retain her hand, I proceeded. "And yet, if she could accept the devotion of an affectionate heart, as a compensation for demerits and deficiencies of which I am painfully conscious, it would be the study of my life to make her happy."

The tremor of the passive hand I yet held betrayed an agitation, which, however, could scarcely exceed my own; for I felt how much of my happiness depended on her reply. I looked up, and saw that the deepest crimson had usurped the place of the lily, and her eyes were bent to the ground. At last, appearing to make a strong effort to regain the mastery of her feelings, she said, "Coquetry, on every occasion without excuse, would be ingratitude on this. I do not hesitate to cast my lot with one who has done and dared so much for me."

"Bless you, for those words!" I exclaimed, pressing her hand to my lips, "wealth I cannot offer you, but I have yet enough to keep the wolf from our door; and sure I am, that if ever piety and virtue drew a blessing from above, it will descend upon the roof which shelters you."

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Philip Stanley, who, like myself, had called to inquire after the lady's health, and hearing that she was able to receive visitors, entered unannounced. The confusion which his sudden appearance created in both of us, evidently afforded him a clue to the nature of our interview, as he directed towards me a look of peculiar significance, but said nothing until we quitted

the cottage, when he remarked, "Ned, you are a sly fellow, and I will wager my dirty acres against the profits of our friend the poet's first book that you have, with professional promptitude, been following up your advantage of last night by forcing the garrison to capitulate."

"And in so doing," I replied, without, of course, attempting to impugn the correctness of his inference, "have afforded you two subjects for astonishment; namely, the lady's taste in accepting such an ugly suitor, and my imprudence in choosing a portionless bride."

"Why," rejoined Stanley, "as to your personal attractions, of which you express yourself so modestly, I apprehend that my fair cousin has rarely seen a countenance more handsome than, when looming through the smoke, yours must have appeared to her on the occasion of her rescue; while, with regard to the prudence of the match, as she has the reputation of being a good housewife, and you are no spendthrift, I will venture to predict that you will find your income sufficient; and should it not be, we must exert the little interest we possess to procure you a civil appointment."

Having, at this point of our conversation, arrived in the breakfast parlour, we quitted the subject to take our part in the discussion of the toast and coffee, as well as of the causes and consequences, remote and proximate, of the late accident, in which the guests, who had, for the first time since my arrival, mustered in full force,

were actively engaged. In the course of the morning most of them took their departure; but, as I found that my presence, so far from being inconvenient, would be of advantage to Stanley, I readily consented to his desire that I should prolong my stay until he had, in a degree, recovered from the confusion in which the conflagration had involved him.

When his affairs were in some sort settled, I prepared to settle myself, as a person is said to do when he commits matrimony, which, to my certain knowledge, has unsettled many a man. However, we were married; and, as there was happily no maiden aunt on either side, we were saved a world of "fuss," and an estate in wedding-favours. The "happy pair," as, by the common consent of mankind and the newspapers, those persons are termed whose experience of wedded life is yet in futurity, set out on a short tour to be terminated at a cottage, which Stanley, who had kindly taken that department in the preliminary arrangements off my hands, informed me would be ready for our reception, and where we could remain until a more fitting or desirable residence could be found for us.

On arriving at my new dwelling, I was surprised, and not a little annoyed, to find that it was better suited for a man of a thousand a year than for one of my limited income. A cottage it certainly was, as respected its style of architecture, but was so spacious that a mansion might have been erected upon its site; while the grounds

by which it was surrounded, were of such magnitude that half my pay would have been absorbed by the expense of keeping them in order. The interior of the building was in corresponding style of elegance, both with regard to the furniture and decorations. Consoling myself, however, by reflecting that I was not married to the house, which, therefore, I could soon exchange for one better suited to my means, I entered the dining-room with a cheerful countenance; but the appearance of dinner, served up in a style which would not have disgraced the mess of the thirty —, with the attendance of a man in livery, brought the King's Bench so vividly before my mind's eye, that my perplexity became every moment greater, and was doubtless quite evident to my wife; who, when the cloth was drawn, looked up, with a most provoking archness of expression, in my face, and inquired how I liked my new residence

I replied, that my ingenuity would be as much taxed to find fault with it as it was to devise the means of living there for the few days during which we might remain; for I presumed she did not contemplate a permanent abode in a house of that size and elegance.

She answered, that the length of her stay depended entirely upon the will of the owner.

"Who," I continued, "is a man of some thousand a year."

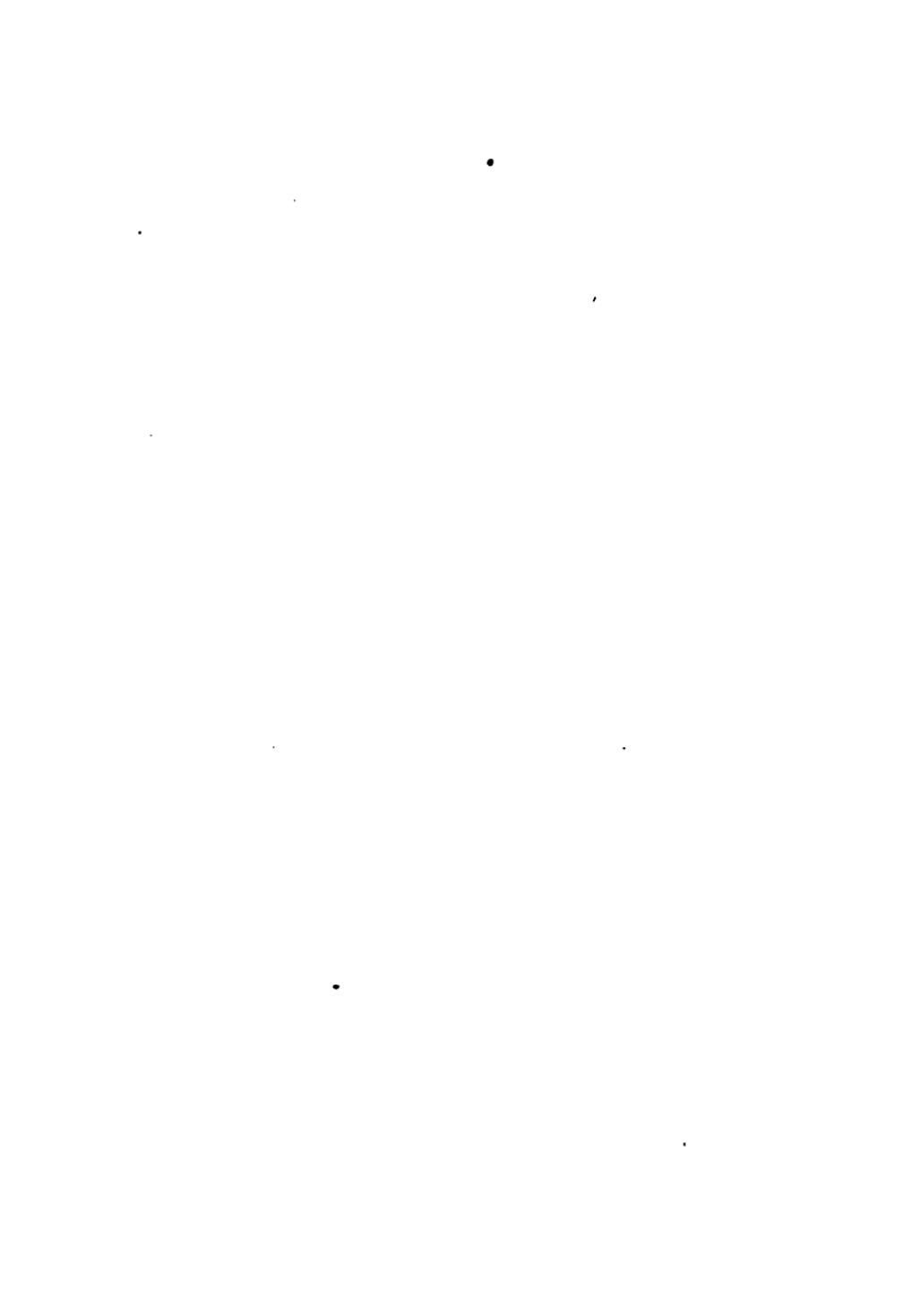
"His income," was the reply, "is as near the amount of your own as may be."

"And pray," I asked, in a tone of astonishment, "who, and what manner of man, may he be, who, on that pittance, may call himself the owner of such a place?"

"One," responded my wife, with a smile of affection and delight, "who, for the love he bore a simple maiden, took her, as he believed, portionless to his bosom; but who has now to learn that his disinterestedness has been rewarded in the form most acceptable to a generous heart—the means of obeying its dictates. Such is the owner of this house and broad lands; and thus I do homage to their lord and mine."

As she spoke, she flung her lovely arms around my neck; and from that hour to the present I have been, in very deed and truth, the happiest of men.

THE LAWYER'S DAUGHTER.



THE LAWYER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

ALTHOUGH not one of the *laudatores temporis acti*, it has often occurred to me as a subject of reasonable doubt, whether time, by what it brings, compensates for what it takes away; or, to make a more particular application of the question, whether, to the elegancies and refinements of life, the moderns have not sacrificed many of the substantial comforts which were enjoyed by their forefathers. Certain it is, however, that time has wrought many changes, and in its course has, as it were, obliterated from society many classes of character, of which all that we know we gather from the novelists and essayists of their time.

Of the English 'squire, as he existed a century ago, few, if any, specimens are left to us; and even their dwellings, the "Courts," "Places," and "Halls," as many of them, to this day, are

styled, have either been modernised into elegant mansions, or are tenanted by the renters of the estates, who are an entirely distinct class of persons from their ancient inhabitants. The spacious brick-paved halls are no longer, or only upon stated occasions "few and far between," the scenes of that enlarged hospitality which includes within its circle the poor as well as the rich, and which, while the port and the canary circulated in the parlour, bade the ale flow in the kitchen.

I am aware that it may be urged that the hospitality of the olden time was too often marked by intemperance, and that, therefore, we have little cause to regret that it has given place to a more refined state of society. The abuse of a thing, however, is no argument against the use of it; and I have yet to learn that the peasantry of those times were not a better ordered, as assuredly they were a more happy, race of persons than their successors of the present day, when the bond between the lords of the soil and its cultivators, if it exists at all, is little felt or regarded on either side.

On the coast of Sussex, within a mile of the sea, about midway between Worthing and the mouth of the Arun, is an edifice, which, although much changed from its pristine "high estate," retains many of the features that distinguished a manorial residence of ancient days. As, however, the mention of its real appellation might not, in connexion with many of the events detailed

in the following narrative, be agreeable to the descendants of its former proprietors, I shall be pardoned for assigning to it the fictitious name of Park Place, into an apartment of which I am about to introduce the reader.

It was panelled with black oak in small compartments, and decorated, as I presume it was then held to be, by carving, in which the artist appeared to have exhausted his ingenuity in the most incongruous associations. The mantle-piece, however, which occupied nearly one side of the room, was a *chef d'œuvre* in this style of embellishment, combining some libellous imitations of classic ornaments, with angels, nondescript monsters, voluted capitals with and without pillars to support them, sphinxes, and shields, agreeably interspersed with some of those hideous distortions of the human countenance which, representing sin under the various forms of the evil passions, are to be found in the sculpture of old churches. The device of a spur-rowel was the prevailing ornament of the panels, and, although usually an appendage of the heel, might have been part of the arms of the family.

At the period of which I am writing, the sides, as well as the floor, of the room were polished to a degree of brilliancy of which its material, the black oak, is so susceptible, but which, at this time, is veiled under a coating of grey paint. As an admirer of antiquities, I took upon myself to remonstrate on this defacement, so unworthy of the taste of its present intelligent occupant,

whose hospitality, during a recent and brief visit, I gladly take advantage of this occasion to acknowledge. His excuse for the desecration was the previous darkness of the apartment; to which I might have rejoined, that if it was light enough for its original possessors in darker ages, it might suffice for him in more enlightened days. A small shield over the door bore the date of 1624, but whether referring to the age of the building, or the time of the proprietorship of one of its owners, I am not sufficient of an archaologist to determine.

About a century ago, on an evening during the autumnal equinox, the room which I have attempted to describe was occupied by two individuals; one of whom was the 'squire himself, whose name was Robert Elwood, a man of about five and forty years old. Although one who ate of the fat and drank of the strong, constant and regular exercise had counteracted the otherwise detrimental effects of good living, and he wore the appearance of a remarkably robust and healthy person. He was tall, and rather inclined to obesity, with a broad forehead, the heaviness of which was relieved by the vivacious expression of his large blue eyes. The other was some five or six years the senior of his companion; of shorter stature and darker complexion. He had beetle brows, a full face, and an acquired duplicity of chin, which added little to the expression of a countenance naturally none of the most animated. In fact, those who deem the face an

index of the mind would have looked in vain in that of Nicholas Robinson for the shrewdness ascribed to the character which he ably sustained, namely, that of a lawyer.

The day had closed with rain, which, borne on the fitful and moaning blast, beat violently against the rattling casements of the mansion, enhancing, by contrast, the comforts of those who, snugly seated by a blazing wood-fire, were protected from the storm that was raging without. Nor were the 'squire and the attorney the only persons in the house who were enjoying those advantages. The apartment in which they were seated opened into the hall, wherein were assembled a numerous group of servants and retainers, among whom the jest, the tale, and the song circulated with a briskness and spirit attributable, in no slight degree, to the stimulating influence of ale of some twelve bushels to the hogshead, while, "ever and anon," the shout of merriment or applause rose above the howling of the blast and invaded the sanctum of the 'squire and his companion.

"The noisy knaves!" exclaimed Elwood, "I must take some order with the varlets; and yet 'twere pity to mar the mirth which drowns the rougher music of the storm. Come, Nic, fill thy horn, man, since thou preferrest the juice of the barley to that of the grape, while I drink reformation to thy taste in a bumper of claret."

"Thanks, 'squire," was the reply; "but, if you would have me change my liquor, you must

set me a better example ; for, credit me, I shall not abandon my friend, John Barleycorn, for yonder thin potion, which I hate, first because it is sour, and secondly, because it is French."

" Well, every man to his liking," observed the other. " But, Nic," he continued, " have you considered the matter I spoke to you about, yesterday ? "

" I have," was the reply.

" And what do you think of it ? " inquired the 'squire.

" You have not a leg to stand upon," answered the man of law.

" Then, for once, Nic, I think you are wrong ; at any rate, I'll try the point, and so you will please to take proceedings against the fellow forthwith," rejoined the host.

" No, I will not," responded Robinson.

" Indeed ! " exclaimed Elwood ; " I might have counted on more ready obedience from one who has never been backward in acknowledging his obligations to our family."

" I am not one," said the lawyer, " whose memory needs refreshing on such subjects. Your father, peace to his soul ! was a parent to me, and you stood my friend when I most wanted one : therefore, to you, of all men else, I am bound to speak the truth, which I do when I tell you that, if you go to law with Smithers, in the affair of the bull, you will certainly be cast."

" But," pursued the other, " if I am willing

to incur the risk and the expense, what objection can you possibly have to giving me your professional assistance on the occasion?"

"The objection," answered Robinson, "that every honest man has to picking pockets, which I should assuredly do in your case, were I to commence a suit with the conviction that I should lose the day. Besides, although you may be rich enough to afford to make ducks and drakes with your guineas, the crowing of your antagonist, for a twelvemonth after your defeat, may not be altogether such music in your ears as the tongue of your favourite hound, Chanter."

"There's something in that, to be sure," remarked Elwood; "and therefore we will take time to consider the matter, and, meanwhile, will change the subject for a more agreeable one; so, pledge me to the health of your daughter, Mistress Catharine."

"I thank you, 'squire," returned Nicholas, "she is a good girl, and a dutiful."

"And the loveliest maiden in the county, you might have added, and been little wide of the truth," rejoined the other; "how is it that we have not seen her at Park Place of late? She has quite deserted us, and has caused Arthur to neglect us also, for I find he is as much under your roof as mine."

"But not with my wish, 'squire, you will understand," observed the lawyer. "It does not become me to close my door upon my patron's son; but I have told you before, as I

now warn you again, that neither your comfort nor mine will be promoted by his visits. You would scarcely desire to match your son with the grand-daughter of your father's steward; while I covet the alliance of no man who would be ashamed of mine."

"I ever deemed," said Elwood, "that you viewed the affair in too grave a light; and as, on your own shewing, my honour is more deeply concerned in it than your's, I think that, until I take the alarm, you may reasonably rest contented."

"And yet," rejoined Robinson. "you might give me credit for some little anxiety on the score of my daughter's peace, which I apprehend to be at stake in the matter."

"By which," said the other, somewhat indignantly, "you would imply a suspicion of my Arthur's honour."

"I question it not," was the reply, "but still may be allowed to entertain some doubt of the discretion of a youth of nineteen in an affair in which the feelings are usually enlisted against the judgment. On the other hand, Catharine's virtue, though the safeguard of her honour, is no security against the shipwreck of her happiness; and as what one may promise with sincerity, and the other with corresponding implicitness believe, cannot be fulfilled but at the expense of a parent's affection, I say again, that, for your own sake, if not for mine, you will do well to look to it, and thus prevent what cannot be remedied."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a person who sought an interview with the 'squire on some matter connected with the latter's magisterial duties.

Although, from the dialogue which we have just quoted, the reader will have formed some idea of the personages whom we have thus introduced, a few additional particulars are necessary to the full development of their respective characters.

Mr. Elwood, who had been some years a widower, was the owner of a very considerable estate, of which he was a kind and liberal landlord. As a justice of the peace he was, in point of intelligence, rather above than below the average of his colleagues in the commission. On the bench he was mild, and as impartial as a man could be said to be, who usually leaned towards the prisoner. Like most others, he was more impatient of insult than of injury; and while he frequently allowed trespassers and poachers upon his own estate to go unpunished, he would, without hesitation, incur the trouble and expense of a law-suit against one who had added to the cause of action a wanton defiance of his authority and rights. For the rest, he was liberal but not extravagant, exercising hospitality towards his equals and dependents without encouraging intemperance in either class. The most prominent drawback on his virtues was his indolence, which exhibited itself more in the procrastination of matters of business than in any disinclination to

bodily exertion, since he was an ardent lover of the sports of the field. His good qualities, however, preponderated so manifestly over his bad ones that he was a general favourite among high and low, and maintained his influence in the neighbourhood not less through the esteem in which he was held than by his wealth and magisterial office.

Of the other, in addition to the fact which will have been gathered from the foregoing dialogue, namely, that he was an honest lawyer, it is merely necessary to state that, being inclined rather to reconcile disputes than foment them, he was more distinguished by respectability than riches, having little more of this world's wealth than was sufficient to support himself and daughter, and to afford the latter the advantage of an education somewhat superior to that usually received by young women of the day. Catharine was a timid, affectionate, gentle, confiding creature, in whom religion had supplied a firmness and stability not originally belonging to her character, which, therefore, exhibited none of those sharp points, so to express myself, which are frequently observable in women of naturally masculine minds. Her person, if it did not quite justify the high encomium which the 'squire passed upon her beauty, was yet of no common order. Her features, although, if measured by the critic's line and rule, they would not have been pronounced perfect, beamed with an expression which is often sought for in vain in more

regularly formed faces. Her figure was light and elegant, and her manner was remarkable for the rare grace of simplicity.

Of Arthur Elwood, it will suffice, for our immediate purpose, to mention that he was a tall, elegant, and handsome young man, who had acquired that polish of manners and knowledge of the world which usually result from travelling in other countries. His taste for the fine arts had been improved during a long residence in Rome, and, combined with his knowledge of foreign scenery and manners, imparted to his conversation a charm which was calculated to render him generally interesting, and particularly so to a girl of Catharine's cultivated mind. It is, therefore, little to be marvelled at that she should prefer his society to that of the young men in her father's sphere of life, who, at that period, were not distinguished either for intelligence or refinement.

It may be deemed matter of surprise that the 'squire, warned as he had repeatedly been by the honest lawyer of the growing intimacy between Arthur and Catharine, should not have adopted measures for putting an end to this intercourse. His non-interference, however, was not attributable to the indolence of his disposition, which any circumstance affecting the welfare of his son would have stimulated him to overcome. The elder Elwood, who had the means of amply providing for Arthur, had sense enough to perceive that an accession of wealth, by what is termed an

"advantageous match," would not necessarily add to the latter's happiness; while, in point of ancestry, he felt that the virtue and piety by which the fair and gentle Catharine was distinguished, far out-shone the splendour of the brightest shield that ever herald blazoned. "I can understand," he would remark, "that a man should dwell with pleasure on the exploits and honours of his ancestors, but he must be miserably deficient in talent and virtue himself who rests his claim to consideration upon the merits of his forefathers."

In justice to Catharine's motives, it is proper to state, that the frequent visits of Arthur to her father's cottage raised no ambitious hopes or even wishes in her heart. She was unconscious of entertaining towards him any other feelings than those of admiration for his talents and gratitude for his attentions, which never, for a moment, did she refer to her own personal attractions, still less to her virtues. But the line which separates regard and love is so fine, that the young heart often far transgresses the boundary before it is aware of having even verged upon it. But self-knowledge is a science in which the wisest of us are lamentably deficient, and therefore a young, susceptible, and inexperienced maiden may well be pardoned for mistaking the nature of a feeling to which, in her humility, she had not dared to assign the name even of friendship.

Nicholas Robinson, however, had more knowledge of the world and the feelings by which it is

governed, and was, as has been intimated, quite alive to the probable consequences of the unrestricted intercourse between the young people; but the idea of closing his door upon the son of his patron was not to be entertained for a moment, and the worthy lawyer was compelled to content himself with the half-measure of acquainting the 'squire with the fact, and warning him against the result. Robinson's attachment to Mr. Elwood was of the most disinterested character, and, so far from founding any ambitious hopes on the growing intimacy between Catharine and Arthur, he would have scorned to purchase a diadem for his daughter at the expense of his patron's favour.

There was another person in the neighbourhood who enjoyed much of Catharine's society, but of whom a young gentleman of Arthur's accomplishments and pretensions had little reason to be jealous. The individual alluded to had taken up his residence, about a year previously to the return of Arthur from the continent, in the vicinity of Park Place, in a cottage on the estate of a nobleman who lived, for the most part, in the metropolis; and who, from motives of compassion it was supposed, permitted him to occupy it rent-free.

In person, he was one of those to whom Heaven, in their formation, has, for wise purposes, denied the proportions which are common to the rest of mankind, his legs being considerably shorter, and little thicker, than his arms.

His feet, like his hands, were unusually large; while his back, either from original malformation, or an acquired stoop, was so bowed, that, when he assumed a sitting posture, his chin rested upon his bosom. His features were large and coarse, although by no means devoid of expression. His hair and beard, which had been permitted to grow *ad libitum*, imparted to his countenance a character of wildness, and the style of his apparel rather increased than detracted from the general grotesqueness of his appearance.

Philip Warner, for such was his name, was the sole tenant of the cottage, and was rarely seen beyond the limits of the little garden attached to it, from which alone his frugal subsistence was derived. The seclusion, however, in which he lived was not, in any degree, attributable to misanthropy; but may be referred partly to his infirmity, which rendered locomotion inconvenient and probably painful to him, and partly to a consciousness that he was not an agreeable object in the eyes of his fellow-creatures. His deportment towards those with whom he was accidentally brought in contact was distinguished by kindness, and even courtesy, while his language indicated a refinement and polish not common among persons in his condition.

His cottage, it will be easily imagined, presented few temptations to visitors; in fact, the only stranger who, for many months, had crossed his threshold was Kate Robinson. In a bosom

gentle and compassionate as was her's, his infirmity of body alone was calculated to excite an interest; and on one occasion, on which he was confined by indisposition, she supplied him with some nourishing delicacies essential to his convalescence, and continued thenceforward frequently to call upon him.

The notice of so kind and amiable a being could not but have been peculiarly soothing and gratifying to one little accustomed to attentions from those around him; while Catharine, whose visits had originated in her compassion, was induced to repeat them by the pleasure and instruction which she derived from his conversation. He had evidently read much and thought more; and, among other acquirements, possessed a knowledge of natural philosophy, which, if exhibited before the *profanum vulgus*, would, even in that day, have gained him the reputation of being a wizard. The mystery with which, in the eyes of Catharine, these qualifications, so irreconcilable with his station in society, tended to invest his character, was increased by the circumstance of her frequently surprising him in the act of reading and writing letters.

Our heroine, for such it will have been inferred, from the title of our story, is Catharine Robinson, did not neglect her afflicted acquaintance after the commencement of her intimacy with Arthur Elwood, although her visits to the cottage might have been fewer, or of shorter duration, than before.

Miss Robinson's admiration of Arthur's talents and accomplishments, as well as her gratitude for what she deemed his condescension in noticing a maiden so inferior to himself in station, often prompted her to speak of him to the recluse; to whom, however, as much to her surprise as her regret, she perceived that the subject was an unpleasant one. Making a charitable allowance for the petulance of an aged and afflicted man, which, she conceived, had been excited by the supposition that she had slighted an old acquaintance for a more recent and younger one, she redoubled her attentions to the former, but without, it would seem, removing the prejudice he appeared to have adopted against Arthur Elwood. Nay, on more than one occasion, on which the latter's name was mentioned, he even hinted the expediency of caution in her intercourse with a young gentleman of his pretensions. But youth is ever confiding; and we can almost forgive its disinclination to follow the counsels of age, for the sake of the generous disdain with which it rejects suspicion.

CHAPTER II.

It was in the afternoon of one of those bright days with which we are sometimes favoured towards the close of the autumn, that Catharine and Arthur, taking advantage of the clearness of the atmosphere, had extended their walk to one of the most commanding situations on that part of the coast. The hill which they ascended is now known by the name of Highdown, and has obtained celebrity from the circumstance of its being the burial place of an eccentric and wealthy miller, whose tomb is wont, to this day, to attract a multitude of visitors from the watering-places in the vicinity.

Although there is little in this memento of a worthy, though somewhat whimsical, character to repay the trouble of a pilgrimage to his sepulchre, the beauty of the scenery, commanded by the eminence immediately above it, will amply requite the admirer of nature for the labour of the ascent.

To the eastward, the spectator has a view of the line of coast stretching to Beachy-head, and, to the westward, as far as Selsea-bill; while the Isle of Wight is seen looming in the distance. Nor is the inland prospect less extensive; the eye reaching over a richly-wooded and fertile country as far as Chichester, the spire of the cathedral

being conspicuous in the landscape. To the northward, the view, although limited, is not without its beauty; the hills by which it is bounded presenting an alternation of down and woodland, while the little villages, scattered here and there, add to its variety and interest. Among the objects which arrest the eye, in the present day, the most striking is Castle Goring, once the residence, and still the property, of the family of the poet Shelley. The romantic little village of Clapham, embosomed in wood, with its church spire shooting up above the trees, is also a pretty spot in the picture. To the southward is the sea, the shore of which is about a mile and a half from the base of the hill.

On the afternoon to which I have referred, the sun shone brightly upon field and forest, and the trees were rich in the variety of hues with which autumn is wont to clothe them. Catharine was delighted with the scene, and expatiated to Arthur upon its beauties with more than her usual vivacity and eloquence. Her companion, on the contrary, though as kind in his manner towards her as he had ever been, was thoughtful and melancholy, and occasionally betrayed, by his inappropriate replies to her remarks, the absence of his mind.

The rays of the setting sun had touched the horizon ere they turned to retrace their steps, and Arthur scarcely uttered a word until they had arrived within a short distance of Robinson's cot-

tage, when suddenly stopping, he thus addressed her :

“ Catharine, I have been a dull companion to you this evening ; and, if you could know what is passing within me, you would not wonder at the melancholy which, despite every effort to cast it off, is weighing down my spirit. It may be that this is the last time, for many a weary month, that I shall enjoy your society, which every hour spent in it has rendered more dear to me. Need I add that I love you with an ardour and devotion which time can only tend to increase, and which no change or circumstance of life can ever impair ?”

To describe the feelings which this unexpected, and somewhat abrupt, avowal created, in the bosom of her to whom it was addressed, would require a power of language to which I have no pretension. Surprise at finding herself the object of his affection, in whom she had never hoped to inspire even the colder sentiment of friendship ; delight, or, if the reader will have it so, gratified vanity, at the discovery ; and apprehension for the consequences, which a moment's reflection assured her the attachment was calculated to entail, successively took possession of her mind ; and, under their conflicting influence, she was, for a brief space, utterly incapable of a reply.

The struggle was short but decisive ; and, regaining the mastery of her feelings, she answered : “ Mr. Elwood, I should be ungrateful

for the attention which you have bestowed upon me, were I to disown the gratification which I have derived from your society; but, from this hour, we meet not again, or only as those who never met before."

"Catharine," inquired Arthur, "do I hear aright? Can you, without a pang—without one feeling of regret, pronounce against me sentence of banishment from that society, wanting which life would be to me a blank and the world a desert? You cannot speak the sentiments of your heart!"

"There is a principle," was Catharine's reply, "which should silence the erring dictates of the heart; and it is in obedience to that principle that I have resolved not to be the means of disappointing a parent's hopes of his son's advancement; especially when to that parent I and my father owe all that we possess."

"Catharine," rejoined Arthur, "you little know my father, if you suppose that he would sacrifice his son's happiness to views of ambition; and, but for the cruel circumstances in which I am placed, I would this moment avow to him my attachment; confident that he would at once vindicate his affection for me, and his appreciation of virtue and purity above all that an alliance with wealth and splendour could ensure."

"Urge me no more," was the maiden's firm reply; "my path is in the humble valley and your's is on the hill; pursue it, and may it conduct you to happiness and honour! Farewell!"

"Nay, Catharine," continued the youth, detaining her, "you do me foul wrong, if you suppose that I deem not one moment passed in your dear society, worth the hours thrice told which causes I dare not explain have compelled me to spend of late among the high and the noble. O Catharine! there is a spell upon my lips—a mystery which I must not reveal, even to you; but if, in return for the assurance that I love you deeply, dearly, devotedly, you will revoke the cruel sentence you have pronounced, I will endure the pang of separation, bitter though it be, with the patience inspired by a confidence that the day is at hand in which the scruples you now entertain will no longer be opposed to my suit."

"Urge me no more!" exclaimed the lovely girl, imploringly; "and yet deem me not insensible to the honour which your preference has conferred on a simple maiden; but the path of duty is plain before me, and, by God's help, I will tread it with an unfaltering step. Once more, farewell! forgive me, if there be offence in aught that I have said, and forget me in all but in your prayers!"

As she spoke these words, she released herself from his grasp, and, entering her father's cottage, which, at that moment, they had reached, disappeared. Arthur, disappointed and mortified at being thus rejected, remained, for several minutes, fixed, as it were, to the spot. The approach of Mr. Robinson, however, roused him

from his reverie, and being unwilling, in the frame of mind in which he then was, to encounter the lawyer, he bent his steps towards Park Place. In his way thither he passed the cottage of Philip Warner, who was at work in the garden in front of his dwelling.

Arthur was in the habit of exchanging passing civilities with the recluse, but, on this occasion, he paused to observe the old man at his labour; when the latter looked up, and, after regarding him for a few seconds in silent attention, said, "Young man, the path in which you are treading is a dangerous one; be warned, and abandon it, ere it be too late."

"Being aware of my danger," returned Arthur, with a smile, "you will best teach me to avoid it, by informing me of its nature. Pray, whither tends this same path?"

"To the scaffold," was the reply.

An involuntary start betrayed the emotion with which the answer of the recluse was received by Arthur Elwood; who, however, quickly recovering his self-possession, continued, "You have taken up the study of astrology somewhat late in life; and, I trust, for my own sake, that your confidence exceeds your skill."

"My information," answered the other, "is derived from a nearer and surer source; which you will probably believe, when I tell you that I have it direct from Rome."

"A good protestant, like yourself, would scarcely receive as Gospel aught that emanates

from such a quarter," was the evasive reply of the young gentleman, in whom it required an additional effort to conceal his agitation.

" Judge you then of its truth," continued the recluse; " I have it from a sure hand, that there were Englishmen in Rome who could so far forget loyalty, patriotism, and honour, as to lend themselves to a conspiracy, the object of which is to bring a sword into their own peaceful land, and to place a pretender and a catholic upon a throne which is now filled to the content of a protestant people; and that one of the abettors of the plot is Arthur Elwood!"

" Such stories," remarked the other, " are more readily circulated than proved."

" Remember you," inquired Warner, without replying to the observation, " having addressed a letter to a certain busy cardinal, which letter, you afterwards discovered, did not reach his Eminence?"

" Ha!" exclaimed young Elwood, unable longer to repress his emotion.

" That letter," pursued the recluse, " is in England, and in loyal hands."

" There has been treason in our counsels!" faltered Arthur, utterly thrown off his guard by this astounding intelligence.

" And where would you look for treason, but among traitors?" inquired Warner.

" Old man!" rejoined the other, wildly; " you will not betray me?"

" My purpose," was the answer, " is not to

betray, but to warn; not to shed blood, but to save it."

"But the letter?" asked Arthur.

"Is the only written evidence, of which I am aware, that can be adduced of your participation in the conspiracy?" replied Warner.

"It is the only document," responded Elwood, "by which I am committed; but where is it?"

"There!" said the recluse, as, having drawn the letter from his bosom, he flung it at the feet of the young man."

"Who, and what are you, mysterious being?" inquired the other, as he recognised his own writing.

"You may know, hereafter," was the answer; "for the present, let it content you to be informed that I can answer for your safety, if you pause where you are: proceed, and you are lost!"

"But," objected Arthur, "I am pledged, deeply solemnly pledged."

"Ay," returned the other, "but to whom, and under what circumstances? To a band of needy adventurers and blind bigots, who extorted from you, in an hour of mental intoxication—and I know the Circe who drugged the cup—a rash vow, which, in a moment of sober reflection, would never have passed the lips of any other than a maniac or a villain. But, O, if you would not die a death of infamy; if you would not bring your father's grey hairs in shame and sorrow to the grave, and make an ancient

and honourable name a reproach and a bye-word among men, withdraw from an enterprise which cannot but terminate in disgrace and defeat! Farewell! I have warned—I have beseeched you; and if, with the precipice before your eyes, you rush headlong to destruction, your blood be upon your own head!"

Having thus spoken, Warner entered his cottage, and, closing the door, left Arthur Elwood to continue his walk and meditate upon what he had heard.

Some light will be thrown upon Warner's allusions, in the dialogue which we have just recited, and a chasm in our narrative supplied, by a few particulars of Arthur's history between the period of his quitting school and that at which we have introduced him to the reader. That a continental tour is essential to the completion of a young man's education is an opinion which prevailed more universally in those days than it does in the present; when parents are beginning to discover that there are vices enough indigenous to our own soil to preclude the necessity of their sons travelling in quest of foreign ones.

When the younger Elwood set out for the continent, he was provided with a tutor in every respect qualified for the office, but who, unhappily for his charge, died on the journey; and Arthur, with the reckless enterprise of youth, determined on completing the proposed tour alone. Nor, indeed, is it matter of wonder, that an ardent and romantic boy, fresh from

school, should desire to visit that classic land which had temptations even for the barbarians of ancient times, the Goth and the Vandal; who, as a contemporary writer eloquently remarks, "scaled the mighty Alps—gazed on the fertile plains of Italy—inhaled, with wild rapture, the balmy gales of that terrestrial paradise—shook their glittering falchions in the beams of her setting sun—and rushed down, in resistless torrents, upon her beautiful vales." *

On his arrival at Rome, his letters of introduction, seconded by his handsome person, agreeable manners, and the reputation of his father's wealth, procured for him the acquaintance of many persons of distinction. Among the females to whose society he was admitted was a lady, who was a member of a Scottish family of note, and remarkable as well for the splendid style of her beauty as for the energetic and commanding character of her mind. Isabella was tall, elegantly formed, and had the step and bearing of a queen.

She had, as will readily be imagined, a numerous train of admirers, among whom she played the flirt, not from fickleness, but on principle; and, although no imputation could be cast upon her virtue, she scrupled not to exert the power which her charms gave her over her votaries to enlist them in the cause of the exiled house of Stuart. In an evil hour Arthur Elwood was drawn within the magic circle of her beauty, and,

* The "Pursuit of Health," by Dr. James Johnson.

yielding to its fascination, was prevailed upon to pledge himself to the support of the Pretender; who was on the eve of the last attempt which was ever made by the family to recover the British throne.

Arthur, being called to England by letters from his father, obeyed the summons; previously, however, pledging himself to his new allies to join them in Scotland, and, in the mean time, to do all in his power to forward their cause in his own county. On his return to Sussex, he found his society courted by the first persons in his neighbourhood, where there were even noble families, who, being somewhat superabundantly provided with daughters, would not have despised the alliance of the heir of Park Place.

Whether it was that the promises of his Jacobite friends had given a higher direction to his ambition, or that he found little to attract him among the high-born dames to whose company he was thus admitted, I know not; but certain it is that he took little pains to improve his opportunities in that quarter.

Not long after his arrival in England, he was thrown accidentally into the society of Miss Robinson, whom he had not seen since she was a child. Although not struck, at first sight, by her beauty, it insensibly won upon him, and, aided by her engaging and unaffected manners, finally made a conquest of his heart. The charms of the gentle Kate, unlike those of the lofty Isabella, subdued without commanding;

and, certainly, the feelings which Arthur cherished for the English maiden were of a different character from those which he had entertained for the Scottish one.

It is, however, but justice to state, that, when reflecting on the possible issue of his embarkation in the Jacobite scheme, he felt something like remorse for his attempt to gain the affections of an innocent and confiding girl; whose feelings, if not her fortunes, should he succeed in his suit, must be involved in the failure of his political projects.

But it is not often that reason and reflection gain the ascendancy over passion in the breast of a man of his age and temperament, and accordingly we find him making the declaration of his love, as narrated in the commencement of this chapter.

Very shortly after that interview, a circumstance occurred which threw the neighbourhood of Park Place into great consternation and astonishment. Catharine Robinson had gone out for a walk to the sea-shore, accompanied by Arthur Elwood, and had never returned; and when the latter was sought for, he was likewise nowhere to be found. All the investigations and inquiries, which were instantly set on foot, proved, for some hours, unproductive of the slightest intelligence of the missing parties; whose parents were consequently in an agony of apprehension lest, by some unaccountable accident, their children had been drowned.

In the morning, however, a fisherman, who had been out at sea all night in the exercise of his vocation, reported that a boat, rowed by six men, had passed him, on its way from the shore; in the stern of which was a young female whom he had no hesitation in pronouncing to be Catharine Robinson; and that he afterwards saw them taken on board by a vessel in the offing. He added, that he saw her face distinctly, and heard her voice in alternate expostulation and intreaty with a young gentleman, whose exterior bespoke him to be of superior rank to the rest of the crew. A countryman was afterwards brought forward, who stated that he had seen both Catharine and Arthur Elwood walking towards the beach, and that the latter was vehemently urging a request, to which the former gave as vehement and repeated denials.

It was, therefore, perfectly clear to every one, that the male person in the stern of the boat with Miss Robinson was no other than Arthur Elwood. This opinion, which, although it appeared to require little confirmation, was afterwards corroborated by unquestionable intelligence, that the vessel, which had taken up the passengers in the boat, had proved to be a schooner in the service of the Pretender; and had been chased into a Scottish port in the possession of the rebel army, in which, immediately after her arrival, Arthur had enrolled himself.

The clearing up of the mystery imparted a mixed character to the feelings of Nicholas

Robinson and the 'squire. In the one, the recollection of his dear daughter's affection and virtues augmented both his grief for her loss and his indignation against her abductor; while, in the other, parental affection was almost extinguished by shame and anger at the outrage, as well as the traitorous defection, of which his son had been guilty.

When the first ebullitions of the lawyer's feelings had, in some degree, subsided, and he could reflect more calmly upon the matter, it occurred to him, that he had, on more than one occasion, heard his daughter express herself in high terms of Philip Warner's penetration, and of the value of his advice; to which, therefore, as a sort of forlorn hope, Nicholas determined to resort.

Accordingly, he repaired to the cottage of the recluse, to whom, in as coherent a manner as his excited feelings would admit of, he related all the circumstances of the heavy calamity which had befallen him. Warner, who had, in truth, heard most of the particulars before, testified more sympathy than surprise on the occasion, and exerted all his powers of consolation to soothe the grief of the afflicted parent; but the poor man "refused to be comforted," exclaiming, in the bitterness of his anguish, that his life had been rendered valueless by the misfortune.

"Then," returned the other, "if those be not words of course, you would risk little in perilling your life in an attempt to regain the treasure you have lost."

"Gladly," replied Robinson, "albeit a man of peace, would I brave the battle's front to win but a sight of the dear innocent."

"Then," continued the recluse, "make brief preparation for a journey to the North; and, in the meantime, I will pen a letter which, if you can succeed in delivering it, may prove instrumental in the recovery of your daughter. The power of him to whom it will be addressed, though it will be transient, is, at present, great in Scotland; and, with the inconsistency which characterizes human nature, although he hesitates not to inflict a grievous public wrong, will not countenance the commission of a private injury."

CHAPTER III.

WE know not, that an account in detail of the lawyer's adventures, during his expedition to the North, would be particularly interesting to our readers; in fact, the records before me are not very circumstantial upon the point. Let it, therefore, suffice for me to say, that he reached the vicinity of the rebel army, having accomplished the distance partly by land and partly by sea; and that, wherever the language in which he told his simple and affecting story was understood, he had received every facility in the prosecution of his journey.

A very short space lay between him and the head-quarters of the Pretender, where the letter, of which he was the bearer, was to be delivered, when he was challenged by a sort of out-post of Highlanders; who, perceiving, by his costume, that he was a Southron, and not being able to understand one syllable of his explanation of the nature of his errand, took it for granted that he was a spy, and laid violent hands upon him accordingly.

Whether it was that the men of the plaid were unaccustomed to the handling of broad-cloth, or that Nicholas was somewhat reluctant to acknowledge the legality of the detainer I know not, but certain it is he was very near being non-suited in the action; his coat, in particular, by the subtraction of the skirts, was reduced to the most poetical of all possible dimensions, namely, the Spenserian measure.

In this plight, together with a soldier of the British army and another Englishman, who had also been made prisoners, he was led, or rather dragged, before a personage whom his captors acknowledged as their chief, and who happened to be a lady. Now, the exclusion of the dear sex from the army I have ever considered to be grossly impolitic and unjust; since, however they might acquit themselves in the ranks, many of them, as we daily see in the domestic circle, are admirably qualified for commanders.

Isabella, the fair conspirator to whom allusion has already been made, was an only child, and





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as her father, by reason of his infirmities, was incapacitated from taking any personal share in the approaching contest, she embarked for Scotland, and, arriving shortly after the landing of the Pretender, put herself at the head of her clansmen; who, captivated by her high bearing and dauntless spirit, readily acknowledged her as the *locum tenens* of their chief.

The path, by which Nicholas and his companions in captivity were conducted into the presence of the Amazon, was narrow and rather steep; it having been cut out of the side of a mountain, about half-way up which Isabella was standing at the mouth of a cavern. She wore a red bonnet, in which was a plume consisting of only two feathers. Her vest was loose and rather low on the shoulders, over one of which was flung a plaid, somewhat in the manner of a scarf. She was leaning on a broad-sword, and, from a belt round her waist, was suspended a large pistol.

Nicholas, who was not wanting in penetration, perceived, at a glance, the sort of personage with whom he had to do, and accordingly explained the nature of his errand in the fewest possible words. To his surprise, however, his story, instead of enlisting her sympathies on his side, had a directly contrary effect; her manner towards him becoming more severe as he proceeded.

When he had finished, she demanded his papers, for which Robinson referred her to her

followers, who had taken not, only the contents of his coat-pockets but the pockets themselves. This evasive reply, although correct as to a portion of his papers, was not true as to the whole; Philip Warner's letter, together with a purse of gold, having been securely stowed away in the lawyer's side-pocket, which one of the Highlanders, on a sign from Isabella, proceeded to examine.

As, however, the loss of either of the articles contained in it, and particularly the letter, would have been serious to poor Nicholas, he strove violently to prevent their abstraction. The path in which the struggle took place was uneven, and the descent, from the verge of it to the base of the mountain, almost precipitous. The contest was brief, for Robinson missed his footing and fell; when the Highlander, feeling that the weight of his antagonist would involve him in his fall, loosed his hold, and away rolled the lawyer down the declivity. The whole affair was so momentary that none of the clan could assist their comrade before he was compelled to relinquish his grasp on Nicholas; happily for whom, however, the side of the mountain, down which he performed his revolutions, was composed of loose earth; while two or three bushes broke his fall without breaking his bones. Thus, by one of those merciful interpositions of Providence, which we are too apt to call good fortune, he landed at the bottom, without any other injury than a few unimportant contusions.

The Highlanders, naturally enough doubtful of accomplishing the descent at so little personal expense, commenced a pursuit of the fugitive by the more circuitous route of the beaten path; so that Nicholas was able to reach his horse, which had been tied to a tree at the foot of the mountain, before his pursuers had reached the plain.

Robinson, however, with two pair of legs beneath him, had little reason to fear being overtaken by the forty pair behind him, the proprietors whereof very soon gave up the chase in despair. Nicholas, having arrived at the encampment of the rebel army without further molestation, was deliberating on the expediency of delivering himself up to the first post of regular soldiers, and desiring to be conducted to the presence of the personage to whom he was charged with a letter, when the sight of a well-known face gave another current to his thoughts. It was Arthur Elwood.

"Villain," inquired the lawyer, springing from his horse, "where is my daughter?"

"Safe, as I believe," was the reply, "but not, nor has she ever been, in my custody."

"Sport not, I beseech you," exclaimed the other, imploringly, "with a parent's feelings, by adding falsehood to wrong, but tell me, where is my child?"

"Safe, I say again," replied the young man, "and within a mile or two of this spot,—but I solemnly protest to you, that I am utterly innocent of any participation in her abduction, although circumstances may seem to implicate

me. But this is no fitting place to discourse on such a subject; come with me to my quarters and, if I cannot promise you the immediate restoration of your child, I may, perhaps, remove some of your apprehensions on her account."

Thus speaking, he conducted Robinson to his tent, and, having prefaced his explanation by avowing his love for his daughter, proceeded to state that, as we have mentioned, he arrived in England from the Continent, pledged to support the cause of the Pretender; that his increasing affection for Catharine induced him to defer, from day to day, the fulfilment of his engagement to join the party of Charles Edward, in Scotland; that, on the evening on which Catharine had disappeared, he had accompanied her in a walk towards the sea, during which he endeavoured to prevail upon her to plight her faith to him, and had been, as on a former occasion, refused; that, on his way, he had been met by a person whom he knew to be in the confidence of the Stuart party, and who was the bearer of a letter, urging him to repair immediately to a sea-port a few miles distant, where, it was alleged, a communication, of the utmost importance to himself, awaited him.

Arthur continued, that, yielding to the importunity of the request, he had left Catharine to pursue her walk, which she chose to do in preference to returning home under his escort. That he repaired to the place appointed, and, after waiting three days for the promised communication, received a letter, informing him that

Catharine had been carried off to Scotland, by one of the Pretender's vessels which had been hovering about the coast for some more important purpose.

He added, that he immediately departed for Scotland, and, on his arrival, discovered, what he had previously suspected, that the abduction of Catharine was a stratagem to withdraw him from England, where his Jacobite confederates, who were apprized of the nature of the attraction which detained him, deemed he had lingered too long.

It further appeared, that Catharine, on her arrival in Scotland, had been consigned to the care of Isabella; who had shut her up in her father's castle, and, from motives of jealousy, though ostensibly out of regard to the young lady's reputation, had refused to permit Arthur to see or communicate with her; while he, knowing that the influence of her gaolers greatly preponderated over his own, had not ventured to try his strength with them in an appeal to the Chevalier, as Charles Edward was called, in whose service he had, he alleged, no alternative but to continue.

When Arthur had finished his narrative, Nicholas, in some degree relieved of his apprehensions, after expressing his sorrow for the unjust suspicions which he had entertained of the other, related his interview with Philip Warner, and exhibited the letter he had received from him, which was super-scribed simply, "To Charles Edward."

Arthur, who had reasons for suspecting that the

power of the mysterious recluse was equal to his knowledge, was very sanguine in his anticipations of the effect of the letter; although he was not without his fears of the efforts of Isabella, whose jealousy, he had no doubt, had taken fresh alarm. It was therefore highly essential that an audience should be obtained by Robinson, with as little delay as possible; and, as a private interview could not, without some preliminaries, be procured, it was finally agreed that the letter should be presented on the following morning, when the adventurer held a public levee, at which it did not suit his policy to be very fastidious as to the quality of his guests.

The costume of Nicholas, although the rough usage, which his apparel had experienced at the hands of the Highlanders, had been remedied as well as time and circumstances would allow, was not, it will readily be supposed, of so courtly a character as to admit of his passing in a crowd at a levee without attracting notice.

The eye of Charles Edward was soon fixed upon Nicholas, which the latter no sooner perceived, than, with a perseverance more in unison with the intensity of his feelings than the decorum of a court, he elbowed his way through the throng and presented his letter. The smile which the quaintness of the superscription excited on the face of the Chevalier, gave place, as he recognised the hand, to a graver expression, which again assumed an angry character when he had perused the letter, which ran thus :

"One of your followers has robbed this old man of his daughter, the pride of his heart, and the hope of his age.

"Assist him in the recovery of his lost treasure, and the debt of which you wot is cancelled.

"I rest, as ever, a friend to your peace, but an enemy to your ambition.

"PHILIP."

"And who," inquired Charles Edward, his cheek flushing with honest indignation as he spoke, "that dares to call himself my friend, has committed this outrage?"

Nicholas, as he had been instructed by Arthur replied, that the immediate perpetrators of it were unknown, but that his daughter, he had authority for stating, was then in —— castle.

Charles Edward looked sternly on the noble proprietor of the strong hold which had been thus named, and said, "I will not suffer myself to think but that your Lordship's confidence has been grossly abused by some wicked and designing person in this matter. Let the old man's daughter be restored to him without the delay of an hour. And," he added, turning to an officer who stood near him, "be it your care to see that they are furnished with a safe-conduct to England, and the means, if they need them, of travelling thither."

So promptly were these directions obeyed, that an hour had scarcely elapsed ere Nicholas had the gratification of pressing to his bosom his lovely

and dearly loved Catharine. The same evening they were escorted some distance on their journey southward, and then dismissed with a pass which would secure them from interruption by the advanced posts of the rebel army, and they eventually reached their humble dwelling in safety.

Arthur petitioned earnestly for an interview with Catharine before their departure, but Nicholas, wisely considering that, divided as they were likely afterwards to be by political events, the meeting could but be productive of pain to all parties, mildly, but firmly, refused the request.

Without dwelling on the details of the last attempt of the house of Stuart to recover the throne of these realms, which, as matter of history, must be familiar to all, we shall pass on to the result, namely, the utter defeat of the Pretender's party. Among the number of English rebels taken in arms, of whom it was deemed expedient that examples should be made, was Arthur Elwood; and the earliest intelligence which, after the last decisive battle, the afflicted father received of his son was by a communication from the latter dated in a prison.

The resentment, with which Arthur's espousal of the Pretender's cause had inspired his father, was entirely absorbed by the anxiety occasioned by the perilous predicament into which the rash youth had plunged himself. All the interest which the 'squire and his friends possessed was employed to procure the liberation of his son; and when all his endeavours to that end proved

ineffectual, and the trial of the culprit was inevitable, every means of strengthening his defence which money could command or ingenuity devise was resorted to. The facts, however, which were proved against him, were too strong to be swept away by the torrent of eloquence which was exerted in his behalf. He was, after an impartial trial, found guilty of high treason, and condemned to a traitor's death.

It will readily be conceived, that there was one other individual in our *dramatis personæ* who was not an unconcerned observer of these events. Catharine Robinson had watched their progress with the most intense interest, and felt the shock of the sentence against Arthur almost as severely as if it had been pronounced upon herself. Her thoughts, it is true, had, more than once, in the course of the proceedings, reverted to the recluse; but the fact of his having had influence with the Chevalier was against the probability of his possessing any interest with the opposite party.

When, however, the law had numbered the days of the object of her solicitude, and the faintest glimmer of hope from every other quarter was shut out, she resolved on applying to the recluse. It was dark when she reached his cottage, in which she found him, seated upon a low bench, within a short distance of the blazing hearth.

Having explained to him the nature of her errand, and described, in glowing terms, the

distress with which Arthur's impending fate had overwhelmed his father, she implored Warner's advice in the emergency.

"Advice," was his reply, "is rarely taken when offered, and frequently only asked for when it is unavailing. I warned him of his danger, when he might yet have retraced his steps in the perilous path of treason; but he was wilfully deaf as well as blind, and has laboured hard for the reward which awaits him."

"But, O Sir!" exclaimed Catharine; "can you—will you do nothing to save him?"

"Am I king," asked Warner, "that I can stop the course of the law? or, admitting that I had the power, what have you to urge against the execution of the sentence?"

"Mercy," rejoined the maiden, "an attribute of God, which it is permitted to man to imitate, and which it is, therefore, his duty to exercise."

"But consider," returned the recluse, "that mercy to him would be injustice towards those who, not more guilty than himself, have been condemned to the same fate."

"Think, rather," was the reply, "on those whose guilt has far exceeded his and yet have been spared. Think upon his youth; on the arts which were put in practice to ensnare him; and think, O think upon the grey hairs his untimely fate will bring down in sorrow to the grave!"

"And think, you should have added, to crown the climax," said the other, with a penetrating

glance at Catharine, and a slight curl upon his lip, "of her whom that untimely fate will make loverless."

"Sir," she exclaimed, in a tone rather of expostulation than reproach, "you greatly wrong my motives in thus imploring your assistance. The hand to which you would imply that I aspire I have already declined; and were it, with the world's wealth, to be offered to me to-morrow, I would reject it again!"

"Pardon me," rejoined the recluse, "I spoke but to prove you; and, for the sake of one whose high principle has achieved so noble a triumph over passion, I will do what I can to snatch this unhappy boy from destruction."

In the afternoon of the day immediately preceding that on which the execution of Arthur Elwood had been appointed to take place, Philip Warner was in the ante-room of the Secretary of State, into whose presence, on his name being announced, he was instantly admitted.

The minister received him with marked respect; and, after the interchange of the usual compliments, thanked him, in the name of the government, for the valuable information which he had afforded it.

"And for which," replied the recluse, "I am come to claim my reward."

"Name it," rejoined the other.

"The pardon of Arthur Elwood," was the answer.

"It is granted," said the minister; "and I

only regret that you will not allow us to do something for yourself. Remember, however, that we still hold ourselves in your debt."

"I am satisfied," responded Warner, as he withdrew to communicate to Nicholas Robinson, who was waiting for him without, the successful result of his short interview; and, leaving the worthy lawyer to see that the necessary legal forms were complied with, departed on his return to his cottage.

It may here be necessary to explain that the recluse had, through some connexion which he had formed on the continent, been in the practice of furnishing the government, from time to time, with information of great importance. The purity of his motives, in so doing, was clearly evidenced by his refusal to accept of any other compensation for his services, than the boon solicited at the interview which we have just described. He had, when abroad, become acquainted with Charles Edward, to whom he had rendered a signal service, not, of course, connected with the political views of the Stuarts which he uniformly reprobated. This obligation was acknowledged by the Chevalier, in the manner which we have related.

To the grant of Arthur's pardon, a recommendation was annexed, that he should travel for a twelvemonth, "for the benefit of his health." Whatever advantages resulted to the latter from the adoption of this advice, it is certain, that he returned to England, at the expiration of that period, in many respects a much altered being.

Reflection, however successfully we may, at other times, prevent its intrusion, will not fail to visit a man in the solitude of a prison, from which he expects to pass to death; and thus it occurred, that Arthur's misfortunes were made the blessed instrument of imparting strength and stability to a mind naturally volatile and changeable. It is probable that Catharine, who, in the first instance, it will be remembered, declined to receive Arthur's addresses, on the score of inequality, was confirmed in her decision by the subsequent discovery of those points in his character, on which her happiness was liable to be wrecked.

When, however, she was satisfied that the faults, on which her apprehensions were grounded, had been corrected, and found that the 'squire not only sanctioned his son's renewed suit, but earnestly desired their union, she no longer persisted in her rejection of one who, with imperfections of which the best of us have our share, had yet redeeming virtues eminently calculated to make her happy. The wisdom of her decision was proved by the result.

The recluse, declining the liberal offers suggested by the gratitude of the Elwoods, still adhered to his simple mode of life. He bore the burden, which Heaven had seen fit to lay upon him, unrepining to the grave; where the deformed and the beautiful,

“Together lie in undistinguished dust,”

until that day when the Judge of the world shall change the bodies of His faithful servants, that they may be "fashioned like unto His glorious body," and "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever!"

THE END.

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